



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Vietnam: Ethnic and religious minority groups

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Executive summary

Vietnam has an estimated population of 105 million and the government recognises 54 ethnic groups. The majority of the population, 85%, belong to the Kinh ethnic group with the remaining belonging to one of recognised others. There are approximately 26.5 million religious adherents.

The law recognises the rights of members of ethnic groups and the constitution states that people have the freedom to follow any religion.

Some members of ethnic minority groups also belong to a religious minority.

People are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their ethnicity alone. However, where the government believes members of an ethnic group have separatist aims or are advocating for human rights, such as some members of Montagnard ethnic group, then they are likely to face persecution or serious harm.

Religious groups in Vietnam are divided into those that are registered with the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (GCRA) and unregistered groups.

In general, there is no real risk of state persecution or serious harm on account of a person's religious beliefs for persons belonging to government registered groups.

People are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their membership of an unregistered group alone. Members of unregistered religious groups who also belong to an ethnic minority, who promote religious freedom or are involved in activities which are perceived by the government to advocate separatism, and who come to the attention of the authorities are likely to face persecution or serious harm.

A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to obtain protection or be able to internally relocate.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 16 December 2024

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because they are a member of an ethnic and/or religious minority group.
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed race and/or religion. Some cases may also involve actual or perceived political opinion and where this is the case decision makers should additionally refer to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to state](#).
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Ethnic groups

- 3.1.1 This note provides an assessment on the situation for ethnic minorities and although sources often refer to them collectively, the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the note will refer to and consider the treatment of each specific ethnic group discretely (see assessment of risk in sections 3.2-3.5 below)
- 3.1.2 Within the estimated population of 105 million the government recognises 54 ethnic groups. Around 85% belong to the Kinh (Viet) ethnic group. The remaining 15% (approximately 14.1 million people) belong to one of the other 53 minority ethnic groups. 86% of ethnic minority groups live in the mountainous and highland regions of Vietnam (see [Demography and geography](#)).

- 3.1.3 All recognised ethnic minorities are Vietnamese citizens, and the law recognises the rights of ethnic minorities to use their languages and protect and nurture their traditions and cultures. However, whilst the government voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), it does not recognise ethnic minorities within Vietnam as Indigenous Peoples meaning they are unable to have the right to autonomy or self-govern but this is well short of constituting persecution/serious harm (see [Legal status of ethnic groups](#)).
- 3.1.4 Although the law prohibits discrimination against ethnic minority groups, they remain disproportionately the poorest citizens, with 90% of the country's extreme poor belonging to an ethnic minority. However, the government has introduced a National Target Program for sustainable poverty reduction for 2021-2025 and as of August 2024, poverty rates among ethnic minority households have decreased by more than 3% per year during the program (see [Poverty and access to services](#)).
- 3.1.5 Ethnic minority groups benefit from some government concessions, such as exemptions from school fees however, they generally have less access to services compared to the Kinh majority. Lack of documentation can also affect access to public services such as education and healthcare. Some ethnic minorities lack documentation due to legal loopholes, denial of passport applications at a local level or failure of parents to register children at birth (see [Legal status of ethnic groups](#), [Government policies](#), [Poverty and access to services](#) and [Documentation](#)).
- 3.1.6 Where a person is a member or perceived to be a member of a group who the government believes to have separatist aims or has been involved in advocating for land rights, decision makers should also refer to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to state](#).
- 3.1.7 If the person is a member of a religious group, then reference should be also made to the relevant assessment of risk in sections 4.2 and 4.3 below.
- 3.1.8 Each case will need to be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they are at risk of persecution.

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3.2 Chinese (Hoa/Han)

- 3.2.1 Members of the ethnic Chinese (Hoa/Han) group are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their ethnicity alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Government statistics from 2019 recorded 749,466 people belonging to the Hoa ethnic group, most of the population reside in urban areas in the south of Vietnam (see [Ethnic groups - Chinese \(Hoa or Han\)](#)).
- 3.2.3 Most people from this group do not belong to a particular religious group. Where they do have a faith, it is most likely to be an ethnic/folk religion or Buddhism (see [Ethnic groups - Chinese \(Hoa or Han\)](#)).
- 3.2.4 Poverty among ethnic Chinese has decreased more than any other ethnic group and they are well assimilated into Vietnamese society, particularly due to their importance to the Vietnamese economy. In the sources consulted no

information could be found detailing specific adverse treatment against Hoa or Han people due to their ethnicity (see [State treatment of specific ethnic groups - Chinese \(Hoa or Han\)](#)).

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3.3 Montagnards (or Degar)

- 3.3.1 Members of the Montagnard ethnic group are likely to face persecution or serious harm from the state, particularly where they are politically active, or perceived to be politically active and/or are Christian.
- 3.3.2 The Montagnards are a group of more than 30 indigenous communities who traditionally inhabit the Central Highlands. There are between one to 2 million Montagnards in Vietnam (see [Ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)).
- 3.3.3 The majority of Montagnards that follow a religion are Protestant, although there are small communities of Montagnards who Catholic and a small number belong to other religions such as Adventism or Brahmanism. Many Montagnards worship in unregistered house churches and they have been subject to surveillance, discrimination and pressure to join state-approved religious groups (see [Ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#) and [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#)).
- 3.3.4 The Montagnards fought alongside the American and South Vietnamese troops during the Vietnam war (1955-75) and are now still treated with suspicion by the Vietnamese authorities as they are unsure of their loyalty to the communist regime (see [Ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)).
- 3.3.5 In June 2023 armed attacks in the Dak Lak province resulted in the death of 9 people, including 4 police and 2 local officials. The Ministry of Public Security claimed that Montagnard groups were behind the attacks and whilst the motive for the attacks was unclear, one government official acknowledged that the growing wealth gap and poor land management by local officials may have been contributing factors. In early 2024, 100 people were convicted during a mass trial for their involvement in the attacks with most people belonging to the Montagnard ethnic group. All defendants received custodial sentences, the majority being between 3 and a half to 20 years a(see [State treatment of specific ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)).
- 3.3.6 UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concern about the government's immediate response to the attacks with reports of arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture and deaths in custody and the subsequent increase in the surveillance, harassment and intimidation of the Montagnard ethnic group (see [State treatment of specific ethnic groups- Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)).
- 3.3.7 Data on the number of Montagnards recorded as being detained varies depending on the source. At the time of writing in December 2024 there were 39 Montagnards recorded as detained across various databases. The details of those detained show all were detained in relation to the religious activity, with nearly all detainees charged with 'undermining national unity'(see sections below on Catholics and Protestants, State treatment of

specific ethnic groups- [Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#) and State treatment of specific religious groups- [Catholics](#) and [Protestants](#)).

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3.4 Hmong

- 3.4.1 Members of the Hmong ethnic group are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their ethnicity alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.4.2 Members of the Hmong ethnic group who are additionally members of the Protestant Duong Van Minh religious group are likely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.
- 3.4.3 There are approximately 1.3 million Hmong in Vietnam, and they traditionally inhabit the northern and central highlands, with the majority of those residing in rural areas (see [Ethnic groups - Hmong](#)).
- 3.4.4 The Hmong are mainly non-religious but approximately 247,000 (19% of their population) are Protestant and a small number around 13,000 (1%) are Catholic (see [Ethnic groups - Hmong](#)).
- 3.4.5 Like the Montagnards the Hmong have historical links to the US and are viewed with suspicion by the Vietnamese government. Hmong groups have, in the past, been involved in political protests demanding religious freedom and autonomy (see [Ethnic groups - Hmong](#)).
- 3.4.6 The law requires a birth certificate in order to access public services but thousands of Hmong lack identification papers with the majority of the recorded 30,000 stateless people belonging to the Hmong ethnic group (see [Treatment of ethnic groups - Documentation](#)).
- 3.4.7 The Hmong have been affected by the government's suppression of the Protestant Duong Van Minh religious group, see also the section on Protestants (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#)).

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3.5 Khmer Krom

- 3.5.1 Members of the Khmer Krom ethnic group are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their ethnicity alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.5.2 There are approximately 1.3 million Khmer Krom in Vietnam, with the majority living in rural areas in the Mekong delta region (see [Ethnic groups - Khmer Krom](#)).
- 3.5.3 Just over half of all Khmer Krom are non-religious with just under half following Buddhism (see [Ethnic groups - Khmer Krom](#)).
- 3.5.4 Khmer Krom activists who try to promote the rights of indigenous people have faced restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly, expression and harassment. In 2023 at least 6 Khmer Krom were arrested for distributing UN documents on human rights, including Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. Following these arrests 3 were convicted of “abusing democratic freedoms” and sentenced to 2-4 years in prison (see [Treatment](#)

[of specific ethnic groups - Khmer Krom](#) and [Treatment of specific religious groups - Buddhists](#)).

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3.6 Religious groups

- 3.6.1 The constitution allows for religious freedom and states that all religions are equal before the law, although Vietnam is officially an atheist state (see [Constitution](#)).
- 3.6.2 The number of religious adherents varies according to sources with the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (GCRA) stating that 27% of the population follow a religion. Although they also state that 90% of the population follows some sort of faith tradition. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) provides a lower estimate of 14% of the total population adhering to a religion. Some religious followers may choose not to officially declare their faith making accurate estimates difficult however, the census data between 2019 and 2021 shows the number of religious adherents who self-reported to have more than doubled to 26.5 million in 2021 (see [Religious groups - Religious demography](#)).
- 3.6.3 Where a person is a member or perceived to be a member of a group who the government believes to have separatist aims or has been involved in advocating for land rights, decision makers should refer to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to state](#).
- 3.6.4 If the person is a member of an ethnic group, then reference should be also made to the relevant assessment of risk in sections 3.2-3.5. The assessment of risk to individual groups has been based on a wide range of sources, including analysis of data from various databases. For information on how this was collated and analysed see [About the country information](#).
- 3.6.5 Each case will need to be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they are at risk of persecution.
- 3.6.6 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3.7 Registered religious groups

- 3.7.1 Members of registered religious groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their religion alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.7.2 The government recognises 38 religious organisations that are affiliated with 16 distinct religions. According to the law, a religious organisation is defined as a religious group if they have received legal recognition from the authorities. Religious groups can apply for recognition once they have operated for at least 5 years. They are required to submit an application to the provincial or national level GCRA and must include details of their location, structure, membership, history, judicial records and summary of their religious doctrines and activities (see [Law on belief and religion - Legal status of religious groups](#) and [Registration process](#)).

- 3.7.3 The government restricts some religious activities and intervenes in the appointment of leaders for some religious organisations. Whilst some activities, require advance approval, certain activities, such as conducting routine religious activities are allowed after notifying the appropriate authority. Registered groups are generally able to operate and believers are able to practise their faith without interference from the state, as long as they comply with regulations and local attitudes and interests and are not a perceived threat (see [Treatment of religious groups - Religious activities of registered groups](#)).
- 3.7.4 Where a person is a member or perceived to be a member of a group who the government believes to have separatist aims or has been involved in advocating for land rights, decision makers should refer to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to state](#).
- 3.7.5 If the person is a member of an ethnic group, then reference should be also made to the relevant assessment of risk in sections 3.2-.3.5.

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3.8 Unregistered religious groups

- 3.8.1 Members of unregistered religious groups are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state on the basis of their religion alone. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.8.2 Members of unregistered religions who also belong to an ethnic minority group, who promote religious freedom or are involved in activities which are perceived by the government to advocate separatism and who come to the attention of the authorities are likely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.
- 3.8.3 Unregistered, unrecognised, independent religious groups can apply to the commune-level peoples committee for permission for specific religious activities, although some groups faced difficulty registering and delays to or denials of their applications (see [Treatment of unregistered groups](#)).
- 3.8.4 Members of unregistered religious groups face official discrimination. Unregistered groups state that they face monitoring, denial of identification papers, arrest and disruption to their religious services. This is more likely in ethnic minority groups as they are often perceived to engage in political or human rights advocacy (see [Treatment of unregistered groups](#)).

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3.9 Buddhists

- 3.9.1 The estimated number of Buddhists in the country is 14 million. Buddhism is the major religion in Vietnam and is found throughout the country with Mahayana Buddhism the main faith of the Kinh ethnic majority. Theravada Buddhism is the main religion of the Khmer ethnic group (see [Religious groups - Buddhists](#)).
- 3.9.2 Buddhist groups are divided into those who are registered with the government and those who are unregistered. The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha is the government registered Buddhist group in Vietnam (see [Religious groups - Buddhists](#)).

- 3.9.3 Generally, those who are members of registered Buddhists groups are able to practice their religion freely without government intervention (see State treatment of specific religious groups- [Buddhists](#)).
- 3.9.4 Unregistered Buddhists, particularly those from ethnic minorities such as the Khmer Krom, face pressure to join the state registered Buddhist group. Unregistered Buddhists generally face more interference in their ability to practise their religion freely than registered groups and can also be subject to arrests, property seizure, disruption to their religious activities and destructions of their Buddhist temples (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Buddhists](#)).
- 3.9.5 At the time of writing in December 2024 there were 10 Buddhists recorded as detained. Most of those detained were from the majority Kinh ethnic group and were charged with 'carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the Peoples Administration'. However, the 4 most recent detentions from 2023 were all from the ethnic Khmer Krom minority group and charged with 'abusing democratic freedom' (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Buddhists](#)).
- 3.9.6 For an assessment of risk to Hoa Hao Buddhists please see the country policy and information note [Vietnam: Hoa Hao Buddhism](#).

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3.10 Catholics

- 3.10.1 There are more than 7 million Catholic followers in Vietnam and whilst Catholic followers reside in most provinces the highest concentration of Catholic followers is in central Vietnam (see [Religious groups- Catholics](#)).
- 3.10.2 Most Catholics are able to worship freely, mainly in churches although some groups, particularly those outside of cities, worship in the homes of followers (see [Religious groups - Catholics](#)).
- 3.10.3 In general relationships between the government and the Catholic Church are cordial. However, issues can arise where Catholics become involved in areas the government views as politically sensitive, such as land disputes (see [Treatment of specific religious groups - Catholics](#)).
- 3.10.4 Catholic leaders and some Catholic leaders from ethnic minority areas face harassment. Ethnic minority Catholic groups, especially the Montagnard in the Central Highlands, suffer from pressure to recant, confiscation of land, imprisonment, and suppression of their religious groups. At the time of writing in December 2024 there were 10 Catholics recorded as detained. All of those recorded as detained were Montagnards belonging to the Ha Mon religious group and were charged with 'undermining national unity policy' (see [Treatment of specific religious groups - Catholics](#)).

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3.11 Protestants

- 3.11.1 There are an estimated 1.2 million Protestants with most members being from an ethnic minority (see [Religious groups - Protestants](#)).
- 3.11.2 There are registered and unregistered Protestant groups. The government

recognises 11 Protestant organisations, which include Evangelical, Baptist and Gospel churches (see [Religious groups - Protestants](#)).

- 3.11.3 Registered Protestant groups are generally able to operate without government interference but there have been instances where local authorities have prevented some groups from assembling or registering their organisation (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#)).
- 3.11.4 People associated with unregistered Protestant groups generally face more difficulties and restrictions on religious freedom than members of registered Protestant groups, including in relation to freedom of movement and assembly. Unregistered groups however do operate within the country and can apply for permission to conduct specific religious activities, although local authorities sometimes interpret and enforce the law differently. Some people from unregistered groups can face pressure to renounce their faith or join state sanctioned Protestant groups. (see [Treatment of unregistered groups](#) and [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#)).
- 3.11.5 Unregistered religious groups from ethnic minorities may face additional issues related to their perceived political activism. In December 2023 the Bac Kan provincial government stated they had complied with the government directive to ‘eradicate’ the Protestant Hmong religious group Duong Van Minh as they believe they plan to establish an independent Hmong state (see also section on Hmong). This has included people being forced to renounce their faith and the removal of religious altars from homes (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#) and [State treatment of specific ethnic groups - Hmong](#)).
- 3.11.6 At the time of writing in December 2024 there were 32 Protestants recorded as detained. 28 of those belonged to the Montagnard ethnic group, with the majority detained in relation to their affiliation with the Degar Protestant Church, a movement not approved by the government with most charged with ‘undermining national unity policy’. 4 were arrested due to their attendance at the funeral of the religious leader Duong Van Minh (see [State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#) and [State treatment of specific ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)).
- 3.11.7 Ethnic minority Protestants, especially the Montagnard in the Central Highlands, suffer from surveillance, pressure to recant, arbitrary detention and imprisonment ([State treatment of specific religious groups - Protestants](#) and [State treatment of specific ethnic groups - Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#) and [Hmong](#)).

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3.12 Cao Dai

- 3.12.1 There are approximately 1.04 million Cao Dai adherents in Vietnam. There are registered and unregistered Cao Dai groups. The government recognises 10 Cao Dai congregations and one Cao Dai sect. Registered groups can generally practise freely without state interference. (see Religious groups- [Cao Daoists](#)).
- 3.12.2 People associated with unregistered Cao Dai groups generally face more difficulties being able to practice their religious worship than members of

registered Cao Dai groups. Unregistered groups have been subject to harassment from the authorities, which can include disruption of their religious worship, and confiscation of their property (see [Cao Daoists](#)).

- 3.12.3 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to obtain protection.

- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 5.1.2 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before 10 December 2024. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

CPIT have used the 88 Project 'Database of persecuted activists in Vietnam', the US Commission on International Religious Freedom's 'Frank R Wolf Freedom of Religion or belief Victims List' and the Campaign to Abolish torture in Vietnam's list of 'Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience' within the COI. CPIT have cross referenced these databases, checking the personal details of those listed including the arrest dates, release dates and details of sentences to produce tables showing those who are, at the time of writing in December 2024, recorded as detained on at least one of the databases. The information contained on in the tables is the same across all 3 databases unless otherwise stated.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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7. Ethnic groups

7.1 Demography and geography

7.1.1 Vietnam has an estimated population of just over 105 million (2024 est.), with over 85% belonging to the Kinh (Viet) ethnic group¹.

7.1.2 The UN Women report 'Figures on Ethnic minority women and men in Viet Nam - From the findings of Surveys on the socio-economic situation amongst 53 Ethnic Minority Groups 2015-2019' (the UN Women report) published in 2021 noted that:

'According to the findings of the Population and Housing Census as of April 1, 2019, the population of Viet Nam amounted to 96.2 million, of which the Kinh ethnicity accounted for 85.3% and the other 53 ethnic minorities represented 14.7%. The actual population size of the 53 ethnic minorities was 14.1 million....

'Amongst the 53 ethnic groups, only six had a population size of over 1 million people, including the Tay ethnic group of 1.85 million people..., those of Thai ethnicity of 1.82 million people..., Muong ethnicity were 1.45 million people..., Mong ethnicity were 1.39 million people..., Khmer ethnicity of 1.32

¹ CIA World Factbook, [Vietnam – People and Society](#), Last updated 25 November 2024

million people..., and those of Nung ethnicity constituted 1.08 million people...

'... In the period from 2009 to 2019, the population size of the 53 ethnic minorities increased by nearly 1.9 million people, with the average annual population growth rate of +1.42%, higher than the corresponding rates of +1.09% for the Kinh ethnicity and of +1.14% for the whole country.'²

7.1.3 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report Vietnam, compiled from a range of sources and on the ground knowledge, published in January 2022 (the 2022 DFAT report), noted:

'About 85 per cent of Vietnam's population is ethnically Kinh, according to 2019 census data. The remaining 15 per cent of the population is comprised of 53 other recognised ethnic groups, 11 of which have fewer than 5,000 people. The Kinh traditionally live in the coastal and low-lying areas while ethnic minorities are a larger proportion of the population in the Northwest, Central Highlands and areas of the Mekong Delta. Ethnic minority groups, while mostly associated with remote and mountainous regions, also live in other parts of the country because of internal migration.'³

7.1.4 The US State Department (USSD), '2023 Report on International Religious Freedom' (the 2023 USSD RIRF), noted that: 'Ethnic minorities constitute approximately 14 percent of the population. Based on adherents' estimates, two-thirds of Protestants are members of ethnic minorities, including groups in the Northwest Highlands (H'mong, Dzao, Thai, and others) and in the Central Highlands (Ede, Jarai, Sedang, and M'nong, among others). The Khmer Krom ethnic group overwhelmingly practices Theravada Buddhism.'⁴

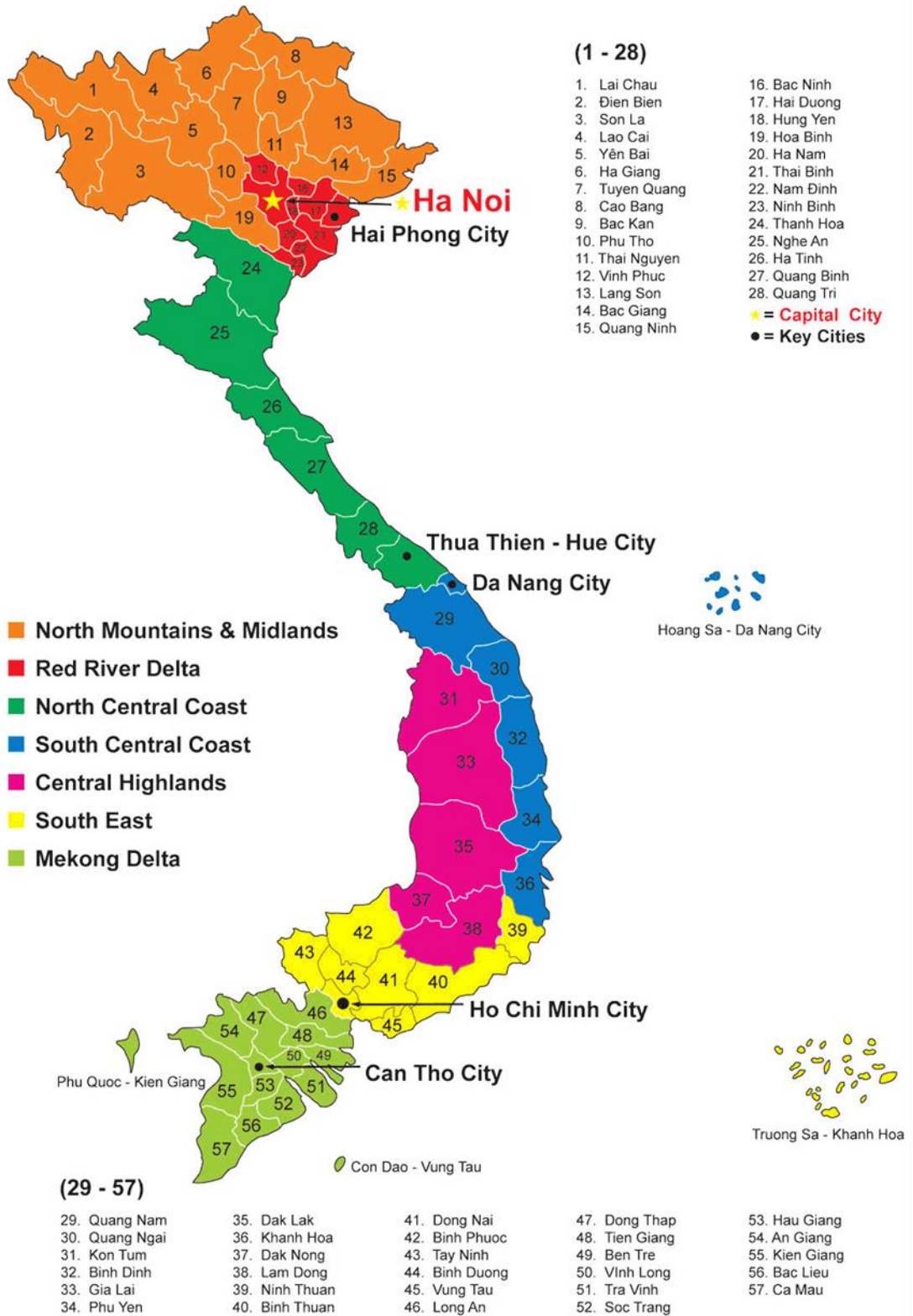
7.1.5 The below map shows the different regions and provinces within Vietnam⁵.

² UN Women, [Figures on Ethnic Minority Women & Men in Viet Nam ... 2015- 2019](#), 2021

³ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.1), 11 January 2022

⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

⁵ Amo Travel Team, [Map of Regions of Vietnam](#), 10 October 2018



7.1.6 The World Bank in their report ‘Improving Agricultural Interventions Under the New National Target Programs in Vietnam’, published in 2020 noted that: ‘About 53 percent of Vietnam’s ethnic minority population lives in the Northern Midlands and Mountain region. Within this region, ethnic minorities account for 56 percent of the population and 98 percent of poor people. The

South East and Mekong River Delta regions together account for 56 percent of the country's population but have less than a tenth of the ethnic minority population between them.⁶

7.1.7 The UN Women report noted that:

'According to the findings of the Population and Housing Census, as of April 1, 2019, ethnic minority people reside in villages and hamlets in 5,453 communes, 463 districts, 51/63 provinces/cities across the country. Almost 90% of ethnic groups live in ethnic minority areas. The Census goes on to show 86.2% of ethnic groups are residing in rural areas and 13.8% in urban areas. By socio-economic region, ethnic minority people live mostly in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous areas accounting for more than 7 million people (49.8%); followed by the Central Highlands with 2.2 million people (15.6%); and North and South-Central Coasts with 2.1 million people (14.7%). The Red River Delta region has the lowest number of resident ethnic minorities, with nearly 0.5 million people (3.3%). The province with the largest ethnic minority population is Son La, with more than 1 million people (7.4%); Ha Giang with more than 0.7 million people (5.3%) and Gia Lai with nearly 0.7 million people (5%).⁷

7.1.8 Open Development Vietnam, a coalition of organisations looking into development trends in the Mekong region⁸, noted in an article published in August 2023 that: '[Ethnic Minority] EM peoples reside in large areas, except for the Cham, Chinese, and Khmer ethnic groups residing in the plains. Most EMs live in mountainous, highland, and remote regions, concentrated along the northern and western borders of the country.'⁹

7.1.9 See also [Religious demography](#)

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7.2 Chinese (Hoa or Han)

7.2.1 According to Minority Rights Group, a 'human rights organisation working with ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and indigenous peoples worldwide'¹⁰: 'Most Hoa are descended from Chinese settlers who came from the Guangdong province from about the eighteenth century, and it is for this reason that most of them today speak Cantonese, though there is also a large group who speak Teochew. The majority of ethnic Chinese today live in the south, with a large number living in Ho Chi Minh City.'¹¹

7.2.2 According to the Joshua Project, a US-based research project that gathers ethnological data to support Christian missions abroad¹², most people from the Chinese Hoa/Han ethnic group are not religious. Those that are religious are more likely to follow ethnic religions or Buddhism¹³.

⁶ World Bank, [Improving Agricultural Interventions Under the New ...](#) (page 10), 8 June 2020

⁷ UN Women, [Figures on Ethnic Minority Women & Men in Viet Nam ... 2015- 2019](#), 2021

⁸ Open Development, [About us](#), no date

⁹ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2023

¹⁰ Minority Rights Group, [About us](#), no date

¹¹ Minority Rights Group, [Chinese \(Hoa\) in Vietnam](#), updated March 2018

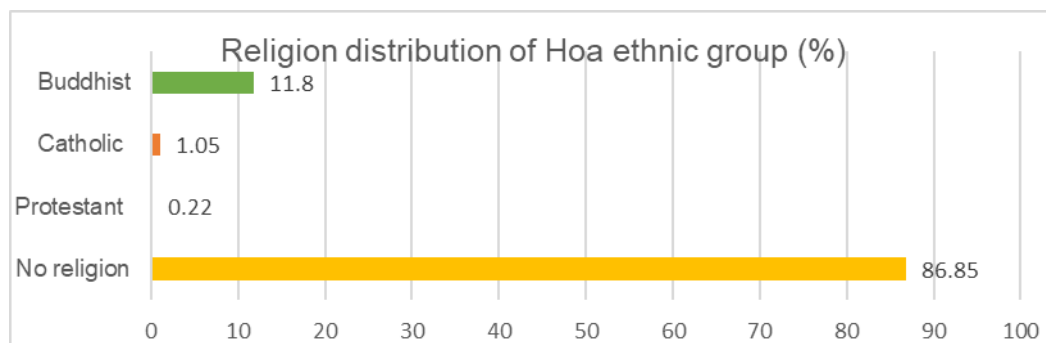
¹² Joshua Project, [Vision, Mission, History, Beliefs, Values](#), no date

¹³ Joshua Project, [Han Chinese, Cantonese in Vietnam people group profile](#), no date

7.2.3 Using the Government Statistic Office (GSO) 2019 population and housing census, CPIT have put the population numbers and breakdown of urban/rural population for the Hoa ethnic group into the table below¹⁴.

Total population	Urban population	Rural population
749,466	522,327	227,139

7.2.4 CPIT have used data from Open Development Vietnam to show the distribution of religion within the Hoa ethnic group. Open Development used data from the GSO Results of the 53 ethnic minorities socio-economic census 2019 to compile their data¹⁵.



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7.3 Montagnards (or Degar)

7.3.1 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘The Degar or Montagnards (French: ‘mountain dweller’) are a group of more than 30 indigenous highlander communities with distinct cultures and ethnicities, with a combined total population of 1 to 2 million people. They are split between unrelated Austronesian and Mon-Khmer ethnic groups. The Montagnards have long been considered a sensitive group by the Government after they fought alongside American and South Vietnamese troops in the Vietnam war, and following protests in 2004 for land rights and the freedom to practise their Protestant religion.’¹⁶

7.3.2 According to the Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO), among the Montagnards there are over 28 tribal groups with the five major tribes being: Bahnar, Jarai, Rhade, Koho and Mnong¹⁷.

7.3.3 Using the GSO 2019 population and housing census CPIT have put the population numbers and breakdown of urban/rural population for the 5 major tribal groups within the Montagnard ethnic group into the table below¹⁸.

¹⁴ GSO, [Completed results of the 2019 Viet Nam population and housing census](#), 2019

¹⁵ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2024

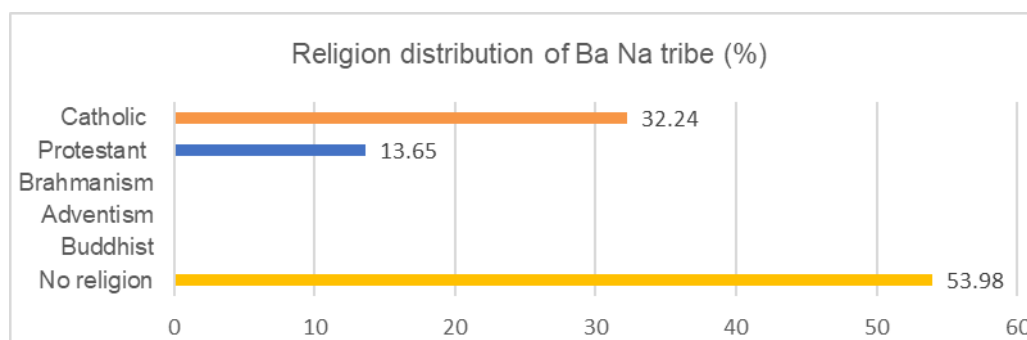
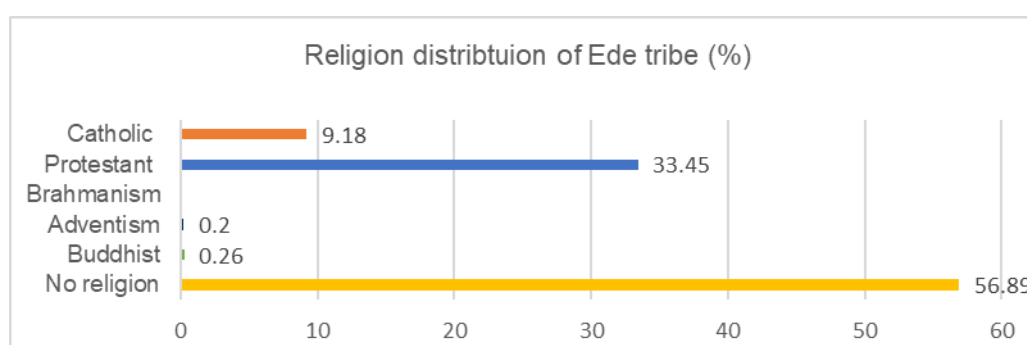
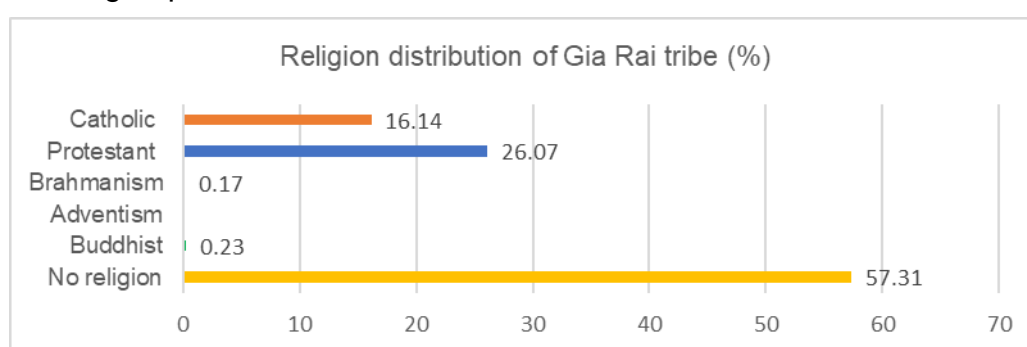
¹⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.5), 11 January 2022

¹⁷ MHRO, [History](#), 2010

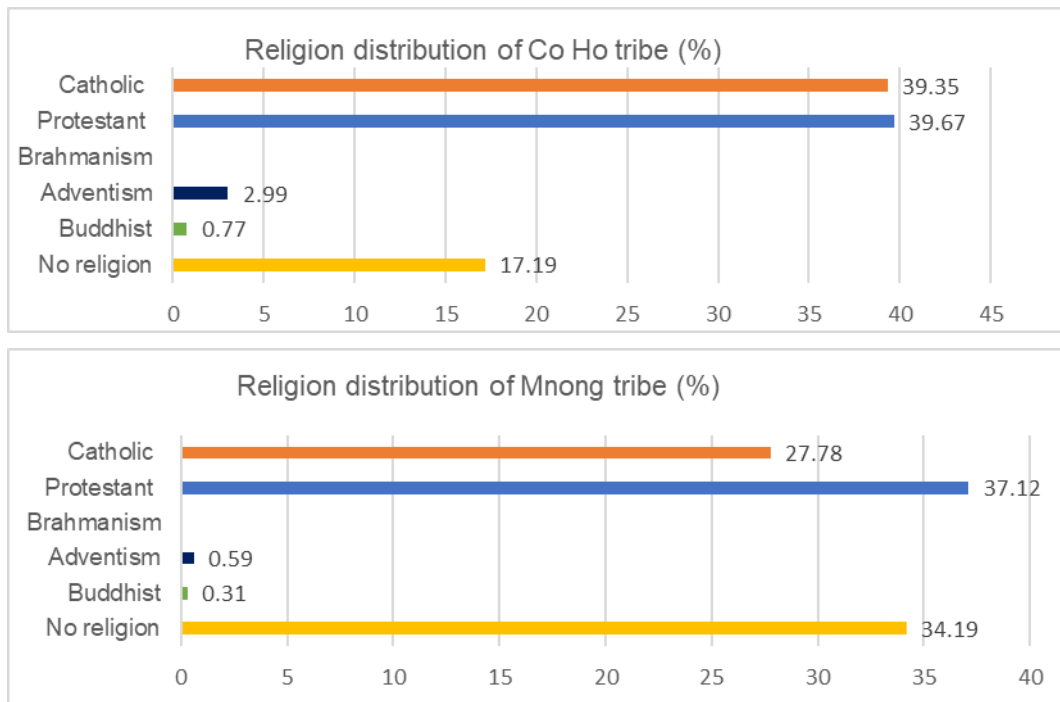
¹⁸ GSO, [Completed results of the 2019 Viet Nam population and housing census](#), 2019

Montagnard tribal group	Total population	Urban population	Rural population
Gia Rai (Jarai)	513,930	53,951	459,979
E De (Rhade or Ede)	398,671	44,310	354,361
Ba Na (Bahnar)	286,910	30,182	256,728
Co Ho (Koho)	200,800	22,235	178,565
Mnong	127,334	7,930	119,404

7.3.4 CPIT have used data from Open Development Vietnam to show the distribution of religions for the 5 major tribal groups within the Montagnard ethnic group¹⁹.



¹⁹ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2024



7.3.5 See also [Catholics](#) and [Protestants](#)

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7.4 Hmong

7.4.1 The Hmong are also referred to as Mong, Na Miao, Meo, Mieu Ha and Man Trang and tend to reside in northwest areas of Vietnam²⁰.

7.4.2 The 2022 DFAT report stated:

‘The Hmong are an ethnic group who speak mutually intelligible languages. They live in the northern and central highlands of Vietnam, traditionally across the borders of Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and China, and they may have Chinese surnames such as “Li” and “Yang”. Like the Montagnards, the Hmong are mostly Evangelical Christian (though other forms of Christianity exist among the Hmong, including Catholicism). Some Hmong retain indigenous beliefs, including ancestor worship, and some syncretic practices also exist.

‘Like the Montagnards, the Hmong have historical links to the US through the Vietnam War era, when some Hmong were reportedly recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency. Hmong groups have also participated in political protests, notably protests in Dien Bien Province in 2011 that saw thousands of Hmong demand religious freedom, land rights and autonomy.

‘Hmong people will often speak various dialects of the Hmong language that are mutually intelligible with Hmong from different communities and across borders. The Vietnamese Hmong dialect is taught in schools, but many Hmong prefer to use the international version. Hmong people have access to healthcare and education, but it is limited practically because of distance and remoteness.’²¹

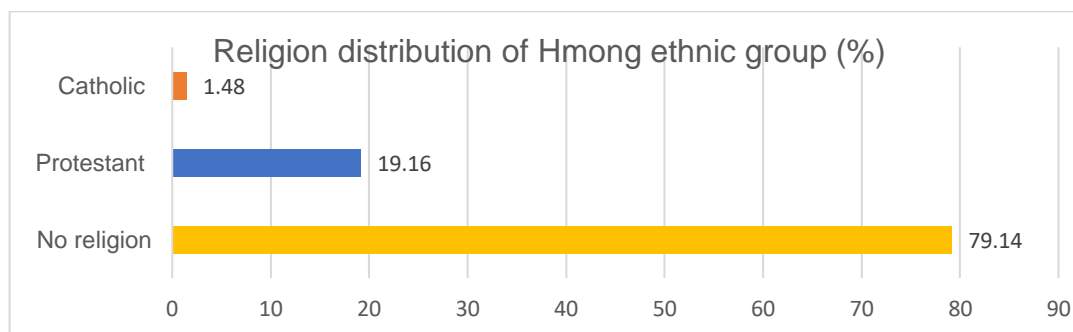
²⁰ Open Development Vietnam, [Vietnam Ethnic Group Profile](#), 26 May 2022

²¹ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.9- 3.11), 11 January 2022

7.4.3 Using the GSO 2019 population and housing census, CPIT have put the population numbers and breakdown of urban/rural population for the Hmong ethnic group into the table below²².

Total population	Urban population	Rural population
1,393,547	45,175	1,348,372

7.4.4 CPIT have used data from Open Development Vietnam to show the distribution of religion among the Hmong (referred to as Mong in the Open Development data)²³.



7.4.5 See also [Protestants](#).

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7.5 Khmer Krom

7.5.1 The Khmer Krom, also known as the Kho Me, mostly reside in the Mekong Delta area of Vietnam²⁴.

7.5.2 According to Minority Rights Group:

‘The Khmer Krom (literally, the “Khmer from Below” (the Mekong)) mainly inhabit the Mekong delta region in the south-west of Vietnam. They are one of the largest minorities in Vietnam, numbering over 1.26 million, and are the remnants of the society that existed prior to the take-over of the Mekong delta by the Vietnamese in the eighteenth century. Their language, Khmer, is part of the larger Mon-Khmer language family and most are adherents of the Khmer style of Theravada Buddhism, which contains elements of Hinduism and ancestor-spirit worship, whereas most Vietnamese are Mahayana Buddhists.’²⁵

7.5.3 Using the GSO 2019 population and housing census CPIT have put the population numbers and breakdown of urban/rural population for Khmer Krom ethnic group into the table below²⁶.

Total population	Urban population	Rural population
1,319 652	310,776	1,008 876

²² GSO, [Completed results of the 2019 Viet Nam population and housing census](#), 2019

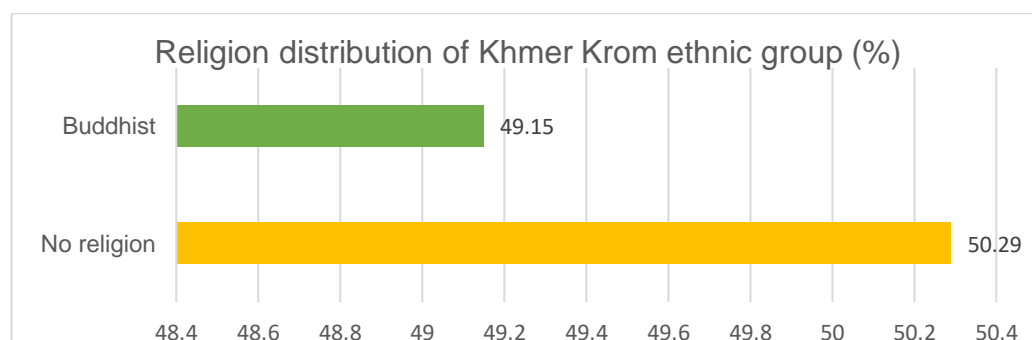
²³ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2024

²⁴ Open Development Vietnam, [Vietnam Ethnic Group Profile](#), 26 May 2022

²⁵ Minority Rights Group ‘[Khmer Krom in Vietnam](#)’, updated March 2018

²⁶ GSO, [Completed results of the 2019 Viet Nam population and housing census](#), 2019

7.5.4 CPIT have used data from Open Development Vietnam to show the religion distribution of the Khmer Krom (referred to as Kho Mein the Open Development data)²⁷.



7.5.5 See also [Buddhists](#)

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7.6 Poverty and access to services

7.6.1 An Asia Times article from March 2023 noted:

‘Extreme poverty fell from 49% in 1992 to about 4% in 2021, and according to the new multidimensional poverty (MDP) index, multidimensional poverty is now close to 9%. Vietnam was the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to adopt MDP measures, using them since 2015 to monitor poverty and formulate and implement policy. According to the World Bank, the MDP index captures the percentage of households in a country deprived along three dimensions of well-being – monetary poverty, education, and basic infrastructure services.

‘... Among those experiencing chronic poverty, ethnic minority populations are disproportionately over-represented. Comprising about 15% of the population, they account for 90% of the country’s extreme poor, and more than 50% of people suffering from multidimensional poverty. Their average income is only 40-50% of the national average.

‘... For minorities, access to basic social services falls below the national average. More than 30% of minority students do not enter school at the right age, and for some minorities access to services and jobs is challenging, as they are not fluent in Vietnamese.’²⁸

7.6.2 Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI) 2024 Vietnam Country report, which covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 and assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries²⁹, noted:

‘The income and wealth gap between the majority ethnic group (Kinh) and most ethnic minorities remains large.

²⁷ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2024

²⁸ Asia Times, [Digital solutions empower ethnic minority women in Vietnam](#), 25 March 2023

²⁹ BTI, [Methodology](#), no date

'... Ethnic minorities, migrants and rural residents are much poorer and have more limited access to services than Kinh and urban residents. They are also de facto discriminated against in terms of access to high-quality education and, within the limits of the party-state, public office.'³⁰

- 7.6.3 Vietnam VN, an online platform run by the Ministry of Information and Communications of Vietnam, comprised of information from major press agencies and electronic portals of provinces/cities to provide information about Vietnam in many languages³¹, noted in August 2024 that:

'According to the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, the National Target Program for sustainable poverty reduction for the period 2021-2025 has initially reduced the average rate of poor households by 1-1,5%/year; The poverty rate of ethnic minority households decreased by over 3%/year (in poor districts only, the poverty rate decreased by 4-5%/year).

'With focused investment in improving infrastructure systems, transportation, electricity, roads, schools, and stations, the face of rural areas in ethnic minority and mountainous areas has seen a clear change. Concrete roads have been built to most highland commune centers; Irrigation works, national electricity grids, schools, and medical stations are also invested in new construction and repair; Communications, Internet, and mobile telecommunications networks are widely covered in every village and ethnic minority area.

'By 2023, 100% of mountainous communes and ethnic minority areas will have electricity from the national grid; Over 98% of communes have public telephone contact points; more than 3,000 public telecommunications access points for people; The mobile phone network has covered all ethnic minority areas with 4G mobile broadband network coverage reaching 99.8% of the total population.'³²

- 7.6.4 The UN Women Report noted that despite improvement in recent years:

'There are 15 ethnic minority groups which travel a distance of 10 km to less than 20 km to markets and trade centers. Under the road conditions in the mountainous and forest areas, difficulties of the means of transport and no guaranteed safety and security makes travel highly problematic and unreliable. Moreover, a large number of EM women do not know how to ride a motorbike, so a distance of more than 10 km to access services remains a challenge...The remote distance from home to schools, hospitals, markets, etc. can present barriers for EM women and girls in accessing basic social services such as education, health care and participation in social and community activities. Some of the reasons which contribute to this situation include: EM women who own and use a personal means of transport such as cars, motorcycles, bicycles, horses, etc. remains less than men, while public transport is not yet developed in ethnic minority areas. In addition, travel on mountainous roads and paths presents dangerous elements that pose a threat to the security and safety of women and girls such as human

³⁰ BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

³¹ Vietnam.vn, [Introducing Vietnam image promotion platform](#), 14 January 2023

³² Vietnam.vn, [Socio-economic development in ethnic minority areas](#), 11 August 2024

trafficking, abuse, robbery, etc. These challenges have made women and girls of ethnic minorities living in remote, hard-to-reach and isolated areas experience greater disadvantages in accessing basic social services.³³

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8. Legal status of ethnic groups

8.1.1 There are 54 ethnic groups recognised by the Vietnamese government³⁴ with 53 of them being minority ethnic groups³⁵. The law prohibits discrimination against ethnic minorities³⁶.

8.1.2 Article 5 of the Constitution states:

1. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the unified State of all nationalities living together in the country of Vietnam.
2. All the ethnicities are equal, unified and respect and assist one another for mutual development; all acts of national discrimination and division are strictly forbidden.
3. The national language is Vietnamese. Every ethnic group has the right to use its own language and system of writing, to preserve its national identity, to promote its fine customs, habits, traditions and culture.
4. The State implements a policy of comprehensive development, and provides conditions for the ethnic minorities to promote their physical and spiritual abilities and to develop together with the nation.³⁷

8.1.3 The USSD 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices, published in April 2024 and covering events in 2023 (The USSD 2023 report on Human Rights Practices) noted that: 'The constitution recognized the rights of members of ethnic minorities to use their languages and protect and nurture their traditions and cultures.'³⁸

8.1.4 The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), a network of researchers and human right activists who document the situation of Indigenous Peoples and advocate for an improvement of their rights³⁹, noted in their annual report for 2024 that:

'Vietnam is a party to seven of the nine core international human rights instruments and continues to consider the possibility of acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW). Vietnam has not ratified [International Labour Organization] ILO Convention 169 and, although Vietnam voted in favour of the UN Declaration

³³ UN Women, [Figures on Ethnic Minority Women & Men in Viet Nam... 2015-2019](#), 2021

³⁴ CIA World Factbook, [Vietnam – People and Society](#), Last updated 25 November 2024

³⁵ IWGIA, [Indigenous peoples in Vietnam](#), no date

³⁶ Constitution of Vietnam, [Final Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam](#), 28 November 2013

³⁷ Constitution of Vietnam, [Final Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam](#), 28 November 2013

³⁸ USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Vietnam](#), 22 April 2024

³⁹ IWGIA, [About us](#), no date

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), it does not recognize ethnic minorities as Indigenous Peoples.⁴⁰

- 8.1.5 The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples guarantees various rights to Indigenous people in particular:
- ‘Article 3 Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
 - ‘Article 4 Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.’⁴¹
- 8.1.6 Article 58 of the Constitution states: ‘The State and society shall make investments to further the protection of and care for the People’s health, implement the universal health insurance, and adopt policies to prioritize health care for ethnic minority people and people living in mountainous areas, on islands, and in areas that have extremely difficult socio-economic conditions.’⁴²

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9. Treatment of ethnic groups

9.1 Government policies

9.1.1 Open Development Vietnam noted that:

‘The Government’s most recent policy on ethnic minorities, released in 2016, is the “Decision on Typical Support Policies for Socio-economic Development of Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas 2017-2020”. In addition, a series of National Target Programs [NTP] for Poverty Reduction have been implemented, in which ethnic minorities are the main beneficiary group ... Recently, the NTP on New Rural Development also addresses the ethnic minorities in remote mountainous areas. The overall objective of these policies is to foster sustainable poverty reduction and narrow the gaps between ethnic regions and other regions of the country while protecting and preserving ethnic cultures and customs.’⁴³

9.1.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted: ‘Some concessions exist for ethnic minorities; for example, they might receive legal assistance, land grants or subsidised specialist education. Subsidies are available to businesses who invest in areas with large ethnic minority populations. In spite of these efforts, many ethnic minority communities are very poor. The World Bank estimates that 86 per cent of Vietnam’s poor are from ethnic minorities.’⁴⁴

9.1.3 The USSD 2023 report on Human Rights Practices noted that: ‘By law education was free, compulsory, and universal through age 14, but school fees were common. Under a government subsidy program, ethnic minority

⁴⁰ IWGIA, [The Indigenous World 2024](#), 20 March 2024

⁴¹ UN, [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), 13 September 2007

⁴² Vietnam Law Magazine, [The 2013 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam](#)

⁴³ Open Development, [Ethnic minorities and indigenous people policy and rights](#), 16 June 2020

⁴⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.2), 11 January 2022

students were exempt from paying school fees.¹⁴⁵

9.1.4 On 18 January 2024 at its 5th Extraordinary Session, the 15th National Assembly voted to approve a revised Land Law. The changes to the 2013 Land Law include the allocation of land and support for landless communities and those with insufficient land¹⁴⁶. The IWGIA World report for 2024 noted that:

‘... the draft law introduces special provisions to deter violations of land policies concerning ethnic minorities, for example, the unauthorized transfer of land-use rights. ...The final version of the draft is... more sensitive to the conditions, customs, and cultural identity of the diverse peoples of Vietnam, including provisions to support ethnic minorities in developing their economy under the forest canopy.’¹⁴⁷

9.1.5 The Vietnam delegation told the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in their ‘Report of the working group on the Universal Periodic Review - Vietnam’, published in June 2024 that:

‘The 2021–2025 national target programme for sustainable poverty reduction, with a budget of \$ 3 billion, was specifically targeting ethnic minorities and those in mountainous areas. In 2023, the nationwide multidimensional poverty rate had decreased to 5.71 per cent, a decline of 1.49 percentage points compared to 2022 and that of ethnic minorities had reached 16.5 per cent, a decrease of more than 4 percentage points.

‘... The 2021–2030 national target programme for ethnic minorities and those mountainous areas was the first such dedicated programme, with a budget of \$ 5.6 billion. Viet Nam placed great importance on the preservation of cultural heritage and writing and teaching in the languages of ethnic minorities. Following its dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on its combined fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports on implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, held in November 2023, Viet Nam planned to issue a comprehensive plan to raise awareness and implement the recommendations of the Committee by the end of 2024.’¹⁴⁸

9.1.6 See also [Poverty and access to services](#)

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9.2 Documentation

9.2.1 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘There is a significant backlog for applications in ethnic minority communities. Fewer members of ethnic minority communities have documentation, relative to the general population, which may be caused by language differences and distrust among those communities of the process. UNICEF estimated in 2016 (most recently available estimate) that about 359,000 children under the age of five were not registered, the majority of whom were living in a ‘hard to reach area’, particularly the remote

⁴⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Vietnam](#), 22 April 2024

⁴⁶ IWGIA, [The Indigenous World 2024](#), April 2024

⁴⁷ IWGIA, [The Indigenous World 2024](#), April 2024

⁴⁸ UN HRC, [Report of the working group on the Universal Periodic...](#) (pages 4-5 & 6), 21 June 2024

mountains. Birth certificates are required to access education and healthcare for children and a household registration is required to obtain a birth certificate, which means that minority children may be denied access to services in practice.⁴⁹

9.2.2 In a joint submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD) published in September 2023, the Boat People SOS (BPSOS), Evangelical Church of Christ of the Central Highlands (ECCCH), Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ) and H'mong for Human Rights noted:

'While the Vietnamese Government did take action following the 2012 Concluding Observation, the changes made were superficial and failed to rectify the stateless predicament. From January 1, 2023, household registration books are no longer considered valid documents, based on the Law on Residence 2020. However, this alteration did not significantly impact the lives of these ethnic groups; instead, it introduced several loopholes that perpetuate their stateless condition. Subsequent to the abolition of the household registration, individuals are expected to rely on the following documents for identification:

- Citizen Identification Card (Căn cước công dân);
- Identity card (Chứng minh nhân dân);
- Certificate of residence information (Giấy xác nhận thông tin về cư trú);
- Notice of personal identification number and citizen information in the National Population Database (Giấy thông báo số định danh cá nhân và thông tin công dân trong Cơ sở dữ liệu quốc gia về dân cư).

'Ironically, acquiring a Citizen Identification Card may still necessitate a household registration if an individual's information is not already in the National Population Database. This presents a significant hurdle for individuals, particularly the H'Mong and Montagnard (Degar) ethnic groups who lacked household registrations previously, as they remain unable to obtain national IDs, perpetuating their precarious situation.'⁵⁰

9.2.3 The USSD 2023 report on Human Rights Practices noted:

'Many ethnic minority Christians in the Central Highlands reported local authorities denied their passport applications.

'... According to the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees] UNHCR, there were approximately 30,000 recognized stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality in the country. In recent years the government increased efforts to identify stateless persons. The bulk of this population were ethnic H'mong living in border areas and undocumented ethnic Vietnamese from Cambodia migrating to Vietnam...

'... The law required a birth certificate to access public services, such as education and health care. Nonetheless, some parents, especially from

⁴⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 5.37), 11 January 2022

⁵⁰ BPSOS et al, [Alternative report to the UN CERD in addition to the Government...](#), September 2023

ethnic minorities, did not register their children.⁵¹

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9.3 State harassment, discrimination and detention

9.3.1 This note provides information on the situation for ethnic minorities and sources often refer to them collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the note will refer to and consider the treatment of each group discretely (see [State treatment of specific ethnic groups](#)).

9.3.2 Nguyen Dinh Thang, executive director of Boat People SOS, who ‘provide assistance to victims of human rights violations in Vietnam’⁵², told Radio Free Asia in an article published in November 2023 that:

‘... [The] organization plans to denounce the Vietnamese government for implementing religious, economic, and cultural repression policies targeting ethnic groups and minorities such as the Montagnards in the Central Highlands, the H’mong in the north, and the Khmer Krom in the south of Vietnam. “We have had many reports on human rights violations in general, and in fact, the indigenous ethnic groups are the most severely affected, including the Montagnards, the H’mong, and the Khmer Krom,” he said.⁵³ The article didn’t provide any further information on the government policies or examples of any human rights violations.

9.3.3 The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) report ‘Concluding observations on the combined fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Viet Nam’, published in December 2023, noted:

‘The Committee is concerned about reports of persistent racial profiling, torture, ill-treatment, deaths in custody, abuse of authority and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against individuals and groups at risk of racial discrimination, as well as those working on the rights of ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples and non-citizens, during the investigation led by the Ministry of Public Security following the attacks on the commune police stations in Dak Lak Province on 11 June 2023.

‘... The Committee is concerned by the disproportionate number of individuals belonging to ethnic minority groups charged and convicted under articles 109, 113 and 229 of the Law on Counter-Terrorism (No. 28/2013/QH13) in relation to offences classified as “terrorist”, defined as acts aimed to “oppose the people’s government” or to “cause panic”, including the 81 Montagnards involved in the attacks of 11 June 2023, who were charged and convicted under article 113 of the Criminal Code in relation to terrorism to oppose the people’s government (art. 4).

‘... The Committee is deeply concerned about reports that people working on the rights of ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples and non-citizens, as well as leaders of ethno-religious associations, are systematically targeted using violence, intimidation, surveillance, harassment, threats and reprisals as a

⁵¹ USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Vietnam](#), 22 April 2024

⁵² BPSOS, [About](#), no date

⁵³ RFA, [Vietnam’s ethnic minorities to denounce discrimination at the UN](#), 14 November 2023

consequence of their work. The Committee is particularly concerned by reports of reprisals for cooperating or attempting to cooperate with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, including the cases of two Montagnards, Y Khiu Niê and Y Sĩ Êban, who attempted to travel to a conference on freedom of religion and belief in 2022, as well as the cases of two Khmers-Krom youths, Duong Khai and Thach Cuong, who were detained by police on three separate occasions between 2021 and 2022, after having translated and disseminated copies of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (art. 5).

‘... The Committee is concerned that, despite its previous recommendation to respect and protect the existence and cultural identity of all ethnic groups, in line with the principle of self-identification, the State party has been reluctant to engage in open and inclusive discussions on the recognition of Indigenous Peoples, including the Khmers-Krom and Montagnards, in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, while noting the ongoing drafting process of the amended Land Law, the Committee is concerned that, in accordance with the present Land Law (No. 45/2013/QH13) and relevant decrees, communities, including those of Indigenous Peoples, are only notified 15 days in advance that their land has been acquired and are subject to relocation, without compliance with the principle of free, prior and informed consent or consultation throughout the development of resettlement plans (arts. 2 and 5).’⁵⁴

9.3.4 The USSD 2023 report on Human Rights Practices noted that:

‘There were reports, however, that not all members of ethnic minorities were able to engage in decisions affecting their lands, cultures, and traditions. International human rights organizations and refugees continued to allege that authorities monitored, harassed, and intimidated members of certain ethnic minority groups, particularly ethnoreligious minorities in the Central and Northwest Highlands, including Christian H’mong. Authorities used national security laws to impose lengthy prison sentences on members of ethnic minorities for connections to overseas organizations the government claimed espoused separatist aims.’⁵⁵

9.3.5 The IWGIA noted in their undated profile on Vietnam that:

‘One of the challenges for Indigenous Peoples in Vietnam is land tenure and the allocation of forest land to communities. Policies, laws and regulations related to land and forest tenure vary according to the different provinces of Vietnam. This creates a situation of uncertainty and insecurity for many [Ethnic Minorities] MS, as well as an unequal distribution of land. For example, in 2015, only 26% of the total area of forest land was allocated to households and 2% of that land was allocated to communities for management. However, some communities complained that the quality of the forests allocated to households and communities was low, with no plant cover and difficult to generate income from these forest lands.’⁵⁶

⁵⁴ UN CERD, [Concluding observations on the combined fifteenth to ...](#), 27 December 2023

⁵⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Vietnam](#), 22 April 2024

⁵⁶ IWGIA, [Vietnam](#), no date

9.3.6 See also [Government policies](#)

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9.4 Societal treatment

9.4.1 The UN CERD Concluding observations on the combined fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Viet Nam, published in December 2023 noted:

‘The Committee is concerned about the absence of legislation prohibiting racist hate speech or incitement to racial hatred. The Committee is concerned about the persistent incidents of hate speech and incitement to racial hatred directed at individuals belonging to ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups, ... The Committee regrets the lack of information provided by the State party on the existence of legislation recognizing racial discrimination as an aggravating circumstance for all crimes. The Committee is deeply concerned by the persistent hate crimes in the form of attacks committed by “Red Flag Associations”, as well as the lack of information provided on investigations, prosecutions and convictions. The Committee regrets that, in the information provided by the State party, it referred to the individuals who comprise the “Red Flag Associations” as patriots thereby legitimizing their discriminatory actions (art. 4).’⁵⁷

9.4.2 Freedom House, noted in their Freedom in the World 2024 report, covering events in 2023, that: ‘Members of ethnic and religious minority groups face societal discrimination...’⁵⁸

9.4.3 The USSD 2023 report on Human Rights Practices noted: ‘The law prohibited violence and discrimination against ethnic minorities, but societal discrimination was longstanding and persistent. The government did not enforce the law effectively. The law did not prohibit discrimination in hiring based on ethnicity.’⁵⁹

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10. State treatment of specific ethnic groups

10.1 Chinese (Hoa or Han)

10.1.1 Open Development Vietnam, noted that: ‘One minority group, the Hoa (ethnic Chinese), is very well assimilated into Vietnamese culture, and are important in the Vietnamese economy. Because of this, they are not usually considered an “ethnic minority”’.⁶⁰

10.1.2 According to Minority Rights Group International:

‘Not all Chinese (known as Hoa) are officially recognized by the government of Vietnam: the Hoa category excludes the San Diu (mountain Chinese) and the Ngai.

‘The overall situation for Hoa has improved dramatically, especially when compared to the repression, discrimination and loss of property that they

⁵⁷ UN CERD, [Concluding observations on the combined fifteenth to ...](#), 27 December 2023

⁵⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024](#), (section F4), 2024

⁵⁹ USSD, [2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices- Vietnam](#), 22 April 2024

⁶⁰ Open Development Vietnam, [Ethnic minorities and indigenous people](#), 30 March 2019

experienced before the 1990s. Overall, Hoa Chinese appear to be benefiting from Vietnam's liberalization of the economy more than other minorities. Indeed, poverty among the Hoa since 1993 has not only decreased more than for any other ethnic minority, it is even lower than the poverty level for majority Kinh.

'Vietnamese authorities still do not allow private schools teaching in Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) to go beyond teaching the actual language. This results in some Hoa parents sending their children to these schools in order to preserve their language and culture rather than to Vietnamese-medium state schools.'⁶¹

- 10.1.3 There was no further information regarding state treatment of Chinese (Hoa or Han) in relation to their ethnicity (see [Bibliography](#)).

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10.2 Montagnards (or Degar)

- 10.2.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Protestants](#) and the section on [Catholics](#). Reference should also be made to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes.

- 10.2.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

'Land is a particularly sensitive issue for the Montagnards. Traditional land inheritance is facilitated orally between family members and this is not recognised by the state. Land grabbing and development has displaced many Montagnards from their traditional homelands and surrounding natural resources.

'The Montagnards are majority Evangelical Protestant with some smaller Catholic communities. They may combine their spiritual beliefs with political protest and have been seen by the Government as separatists in the past (for example during protests in the first decade of this century when they demanded greater self-determination and religious freedom).'⁶²

- 10.2.3 Voice of America (VOA) reported in July 2023 that:

'Vietnamese authorities reportedly have heightened security and increased the persecution of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands after a deadly attack last month on government buildings there.

'The Central Highlands is home to Montagnards, an umbrella term for ethnic minorities native to the region, many of whom identify as Christian. They have historically been at odds with Vietnam's one-party state and have grievances going back decades, relating to issues including land appropriation and religious persecution. Rights groups and Montagnard refugees living abroad say the government has intensified the crackdown on native highlanders.

'On June 11 [2023], two groups in the Ea Ktur and Ea Tieu communes of Dak Lak province attacked the local People's Committee buildings using

⁶¹ Minority Rights Group, [Chinese \(Hoa\) in Vietnam](#), updated March 2018

⁶² DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.6- 3.7), 11 January 2022

guns and Molotov cocktails. The incident left nine people dead, including four police officers, two commune leaders, and three residents, according to state media.

'Rights groups in contact with Montagnards in the region say the attack has exacerbated repression in the region and put Montagnard refugees in nearby Thailand at risk. There are fears the Vietnamese government will use the incident as justification to increase its harsh policing of the region.

'Authorities responded to the attack in force, bringing in security troops from the Public Security Ministry and the Vietnamese People's Army.

'Deputy Public Security Minister Le Quoc Hung on June 12 called the Dak Lak shootings "terrorist acts" with the "instruction and support of hostile parties abroad." He said the ministry had utilized all its resources to arrest the suspects and seized all weapons from the attack. More than 90 suspects have now been arrested for various crimes including terrorism, according to local media reports.

'... Although the motive of the attackers is unknown, experts point to the long-running repression of Montagnard rights in Vietnam and a lack of sufficient response from the Vietnamese government.'⁶³

10.2.4 Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported in September 2023 that a government official had stated that land disputes and a growing wealth gap were partly to blame for the Dak Lak attack. The report noted that:

'... Vice Minister of Public Security Tran Quoc To called the incident "unfortunate," according to a report by the official Tien Phong (Pioneer) newspaper, and acknowledged that frustration over Vietnam's growing wealth gap and poor land management by local officials were partly to blame.

'However, the vice minister, who is also the brother of late President Tran Dai Quang, stressed that "negligence was not the only issue at play" and told the National Assembly Committee reviewing an investigation of the attacks that they were an "inevitable consequence of relentless opposition and sabotage" of the government.

'The Vietnamese government and state media often refer to peaceful critics of state policies and those who call for greater protections of human rights as "hostile forces" – particularly overseas Vietnamese activists.'⁶⁴

10.2.5 Radio Free Asia noted in a report from 6 March 2024 that:

'Vietnam has accused two foreign-based political groups of being "terrorist organizations" that helped plan an attack in Vietnam's Central Highlands last June leaving nine people dead.

'The country's Ministry of Public Security identified them as the United States-based Montagnard Support Group Inc. (MSGI) and Montagnard Stand for Justice (MSFJ), which was formed in Thailand in 2017 and began operating in the U.S. two years later.

⁶³ VOA, [Deadly Conflict in Vietnam's Central Highlands Ramps Up Persecution of...](#), 17 July 2023

⁶⁴ RFA, [In a first, Vietnam admits government accountability in Dak Lak attacks](#), 7 September 2023

'... MSGI and MSFJ have campaigned for their rights, claiming they struggle to receive official documentation and often lose out in land grabs by local authorities. Many are also harassed and prevented from practicing their religion.

'Wednesday's statement from the ministry claimed the two groups recruited and trained people to "carry out terrorist activities, incite protests, kill officials and civilians, sabotage state assets and try to establish their own states."

'The claims relate to the attacks on June 11, 2023 when dozens of Montagnards, divided into two groups, attacked the headquarters of the People's Committee and the police of Ea Tieu and Ea Ktur communes in Dak Lak province. Four police officers, two commune officials, and three civilians died in the attacks.

'MSFJ co-founder Y Phik Hdok told Radio Free Asia his group never advocated violence. He said it operated peacefully with the goal of fighting for human rights and religious freedom and denied the ministry's claims.'⁶⁵

10.2.6 The IWGIA World report 2024 noted in relation to the Dak Lak attacks that:

'While the motivation and goal of the Dak Lak attackers remains unclear, the Central Highlands is known to be home to around 30 Indigenous Peoples collectively known as Montagnards (sometimes referred to as Dega). For decades, the area has seen tensions between the Kinh people and the Montagnards, as well as protests and clashes targeting the central state, particularly over land, economic difficulties, and crackdowns on evangelical churches. The Vietnamese authorities claim that, during searches related to the case, in addition to weapons, explosives and ammunition, they also seized 10 FULRO flags, further claiming that the assailants aimed to establish an independent Dega state. FULRO – the Front Uni de Lutte des Races Opprimées or the United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races – was an armed organization that was dissolved in the early 1990s and which operated in central and southern Vietnam with the objective of achieving autonomy for various Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities.'⁶⁶

10.2.7 On 14 June 2024, in a joint letter sent to the Vietnam government, 13 Special Rapporteurs from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that:

'Armed attacks on two commune police stations in Dak Lak Province, Central Highlands, on 11 June 2023 killed nine people, including four police officers, two local officials (the Secretary of Ea Ktur commune and the Chairman of Ea Tieu commune) and three civilians, and injured two police officers and a number of others. In response an intense security operation involving heavily armed police and other security units from Viet Nam's Ministry of Public Security rapidly led to the detention of a large number of people. Local residents were called on by state media to assist the authorities to search for and apprehend persons wearing commonplace "camouflage" clothing, and duly armed themselves with knives, machetes and sticks, leading to individuals being arrested and some being beaten. Some Montagnard residents fled their homes in fear and there were reports

⁶⁵ RFA, [Vietnam labels 2 foreign-based groups 'terrorist organizations'](#), 6 March 2024

⁶⁶ IWGIA, [The Indigenous World 2024](#), April 2024

of arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including of Christian missionaries. The border with Cambodia was closed in cooperation with the Cambodian Government, which declared that anyone crossing the border would be arrested and returned to Viet Nam. Detainees were denied access to lawyers for protracted periods of months following their arrests and were also denied access to family visits.

‘On 20 January 2024, 100 defendants were convicted for their alleged involvement in the attacks by a “mobile court” (xet xu luu dong) of five judges, including the Chief Justice of Dak Lak Provincial People’s Court (verdict 08/2024/HS-ST). The trial was held in Residential Area 11, Ea Tam ward of Buon Ma Thuot city. The trial proceedings took place over a period of five days, with one day of deliberations. Nineteen lawyers were present at the trial to represent the 94 defendants who were present at the trial. However, the six defendants who were tried and sentenced in absentia did not receive legal representation. The Vietnamese authorities claimed that the defendants confessed, expressed remorse, and asked for leniency. The sentences were as follows:

- Ten defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment for the offence of “terrorism to oppose the people’s government” under article 113 of the Criminal Code of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Law No. 100/2015/QH13, 27 November 2015;
- Forty-three defendants received prison sentences of between six to 20 years under the same offence;
- Forty-five defendants, including six who were tried in absentia, received prison sentences of between three and a half and 11 years for the offence of “terrorism” under article 299 of the Criminal Code 2015;
- One defendant received a two-year prison sentence for “organizing, brokering others illegally exit, enter or stay in Viet Nam” under article 348 of the Criminal Code 2015; and
- One defendant received a nine-month prison sentence for “concealment of crimes” under article 389 of the Criminal Code 2015

‘Most of the defendants were indigenous Montagnards ... while one is of the majority Kinh ethnic background... The Vietnamese authorities declared that the defendants were incited and directed online by US-based “reactionary” ethnic minority organizations to mount the attack, by forming the armed group “Degar Soldiers”, with the aim to overthrow the Vietnamese government and establish the “Degar State”. The authorities also identified as responsible the United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races (Front unifié de lutte des races opprimées) (FULRO), a militant organization founded in 1964 to pursue autonomy of indigenous people and minorities in Viet Nam and dissolved in 1992.

‘... In connection with the 11 June 2023 attack, on 6 March 2024 the Ministry of Public Security listed Montagnards Stand for Justice (MSFJ) (Người Thượng vì công lý) as a terrorist organization. MSFJ allegedly engaged the “Degar Soldiers” group to carry out the 11 June 2023 attack, in order to

establish a “Degar State”. As a result of the listing, the authorities warn that “anyone who engaged in, propagated, enticed, incited others to participate, sponsored or received sponsorship, or participated in training courses organized by MSFJ, or followed its direction, would be charged with “terrorism” or “supporting terrorism”.

‘MSFJ denies involvement in terrorism or the attack of 11 June 2023 and views the designations as a pretext for suppressing Montagnard groups in exile that document and expose human rights violations against Montagnards in Viet Nam.

‘... We are concerned that the excessive response to the 11 June 2023 attack, the unfair mass trial of January 2024, the listing MSFJ as terrorist in March 2024, and the alleged intimidation of Vietnamese refugees in Thailand in March 2024 seem to be part of a larger and intensifying pattern of discriminatory and repressive surveillance, security controls, harassment and intimidation against the Montagnard indigenous minority peoples in the Central Highlands. The attack of June 2023 appears to have served as a pretext for this escalation. This repressive campaign appears directed against Montagnard individuals and groups in Viet Nam and abroad who criticize or protest against the actions and policies of the Vietnamese Government, including human rights defenders, as well as those who identify as members of unregistered evangelical Christian “house churches”.

‘... We are concerned that the authorities have particularly escalated the targeting of Montagnard minority religious practices in the Central Highlands since the June 2023 attack, including through harassment, intimidation, forced renunciation of faith and forced conversions, criminalization and violence against leaders and members of officially unrecognized Montagnard evangelical “house churches”’.⁶⁷

10.2.8 In August 2024 RFA reported that:

‘Police in Vietnam’s Central Highlands have arrested a member of the Montagnard community on charges of collecting one-sided information and reporting it to other members of the ethnic minority group living abroad in order to oppose the government.

‘Police investigators in Dak Lak province announced the arrest of Y Po Mlo, 63, last Thursday on charges of “undermining the solidarity policy” under Article 116 of the criminal code.

‘Government officials “repeatedly educated, reminded and brought Y Po Mlo to self-criticism” for contacting and receiving instructions from U.S.-based Montagnard Y Mut Mlo, the Ministry of Public Security reported.

‘Y Mut Mlo was sentenced in absentia to 11 years in prison on terrorism charges in connection with a fatal attack on two administration offices in Dak Lak province on June 11, 2023.’⁶⁸

10.2.9 At the time of writing in December 2024, there were 39 Montagnards

⁶⁷ OHCHR, [AL VNM \(4.2024\)](#), 14 June 2024

⁶⁸ RFA, [‘Vietnam arrests Montagnard for ‘undermining solidarity’](#)’, 19 August 2024

recorded as detained across various databases^{69 70 71}. As the detention related to their religious activity CPIT have included more details below in the relevant section on [Catholics](#) and [Protestants](#).

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10.3 Hmong

- 10.3.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Protestants](#). Reference should also be made to the [Country Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes.
- 10.3.2 The BPSOS noted a joint submission to the UN CERD in September 2023 that: ‘The H’mong, especially H’mong Christians, face “double discrimination” stemming from both their ethnic identity and religious practices.’⁷²
- 10.3.3 Children of the Mekong, a charitable organisation established to help underprivileged children through access to education⁷³, noted that: ‘Allies of the French in the First Indochina War, the Hmong have a reputation for being a warlike people, fiercely proud of their independence. But since 1975 they have been persecuted by the authorities in Vietnam and in Laos. With a culture of their own, they share little common ground with the Vietnamese government and are often subject to cultural ostracism, which sometimes escalates into downright persecution.’⁷⁴ The source did not give examples of the type of persecution the Hmong were subjected to or the basis for this assessment.
- 10.3.4 At the time of writing in December 2024, there were 6 Hmong recorded as detained across various databases^{75 76}. 4 were detained due to their religious activity and CPIT have included more details below in the relevant section on [Protestants](#). The details of the remaining 2 show that they were detained and charged in relation to accusations of attempting to overthrow the state and set up an independent Hmong state. Both were sentenced to life in prison⁷⁷ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).
- 10.3.5 There was no further information regarding state treatment of Hmong in relation to their ethnicity (see [Bibliography](#)). Reference should be made to the section on state treatment of [Protestants](#).

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10.4 Khmer Krom

- 10.4.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Buddhists](#). Reference should also be made to the [Country](#)

⁶⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

⁷⁰ USCIRF, ‘[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)’, no date

⁷¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

⁷² BPSOS, [Race-based discrimination against H’mong in Vietnam](#), August 2023

⁷³ Children of the Mekong, [Our History](#), no date

⁷⁴ Children of the Mekong, [The Hmong people, ethnic minority in Vietnam](#), no date

⁷⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

⁷⁶ USCIRF, ‘[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)’, no date

⁷⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

[Policy and Information Note on Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes.

- 10.4.2 Vietnam Human Rights Network, a US based non-profit organisation set up to defend and promote human rights, civil liberties and other fundamental freedoms for Vietnamese citizens⁷⁸, noted in their annual report covering events in 2022 and 2023 that:

‘In some provinces in the Mekong Delta, the government has gone even further in the name of “national unity” to deny the rights of the Khmer Krom minority. In 2022 and 2023, at least six Khmer Krom people were detained, questioned, and accused of violating criminal law while only trying to disseminate UN documents on human rights, including the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP)... Those people are Mr. Duong Khai (arrested on February 4, 2022), Mr. Danh Set (detained on February 18, 2022), Mr. Danh Minh Quang (arrested on October 23, 2022), Mr. Chau Ly Na (detained on October 23, 2022). on October 24, 2022, and Mr. Trieu Sieu (arrested on January 20, 2023.)

‘On July 31, 2023, the police arrested and prosecuted three Khmer Krom people, ...namely Mr. Danh Minh Quang, Mr. Thach Cuong, and Mr. To Hoang Chuong, for” “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and individuals” according to Article 331 of the Vietnam Criminal code.’⁷⁹

- 10.4.3 Radio Free Asia reported in April 2024 that: ‘The nearly 1.3-million strong Khmer Krom indigenous community live in a part of Vietnam that was once southeastern Cambodia. They have faced serious restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and movement. Additionally, the Vietnamese government has tried to restrict and control Buddhist temples attended by Khmer Krom people.’⁸⁰

- 10.4.4 UNPO⁸¹ reported in April 2024 that: ‘The Khmer-Krom community is being harassed by Vietnamese authorities in Vinh Long province. The recent demolition of a sacred religious hall and the arbitrary arrest of Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and leaders reflect a pattern of cultural erasure and religious suppression. These actions violate indigenous rights, requiring immediate international condemnation.’⁸²

- 10.4.5 In April 2024 the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation, or KKF, a global organisation run by volunteers that represent Khmer-Krom people living in the Mekong Delata and surrounding regions⁸³, posted an open letter on the website change.org to collect signatures calling for the UN Secretary General to suspend Vietnam’s membership of the UN Human Rights Council. The letter published on change.org noted:

‘Vietnam’s recent crackdown on the indigenous Khmer-Krom community has reached alarming levels, with widespread reports of arbitrary arrests, unjust

⁷⁸ VHRN, [About VHRN](#), no date

⁷⁹ VHRN, [Report on Human Rights in Vietnam 2022 - 2023](#), 18 November 2023

⁸⁰ RFA, [Khmer Krom demonstrate in Phnom Penh against raids, arrests in Vietnam](#), 24 April 2024

⁸¹ UNPO, [About](#), No date

⁸² UNPO, [UNPO Condemns Vietnam’s Ongoing Persecution of Khmer-Krom...](#), 9 April, 2024

⁸³ KKF, [About KKF](#), no date

imprisonment, and religious persecution. Of particular concern is the sentencing of Khmer-Krom activists, including Mr. Thach Cuong, Mr. To Hoang Chuong, Mr. Danh Minh Quang, and Mrs. Dinh Thi Huynh, to prison terms ranging from 2 to 4 years for "abusing democratic freedom" under Article 331 of the Vietnam criminal code. These individuals have been targeted solely for their peaceful advocacy on behalf of their indigenous community, such as distributing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) or organizing events to celebrate International Human Rights Day or International Women's Day.⁸⁴

10.4.6 On July 31, 2024, The KhmerPost USA LLC, an independent newspaper that aims to facilitate mass communication among the Cambodian communities⁸⁵, published a report on the 75th anniversary of the French colonial transfer of control of Kampuchea Krom to Vietnam and stated that:

'The Khmer Krom Federation on June 4 issued a statement highlighting the 75 years of Khmer Krom human rights violations under Vietnamese rule, including attempts to eradicate the Khmer Krom culture and religion and suppress the freedom of expression of the Khmer Krom. The federation states that these are the factors that make the Khmer Krom people stand up and advocate with the Vietnamese government on the international stage to demand the right to self-determination. The Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation urges the Vietnamese government, as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, to respect its commitments and respect the fundamental rights of the Khmer Krom in accordance with the treaty that Vietnam has signed with the United Nations.'⁸⁶

10.4.7 Radio Free Asia reported in June 2024 that:

'Authorities in southern Vietnam have stepped-up harassment of activists from the ethnic Cambodian Khmer Krom community who are trying to promote the rights of the indigenous people, according to representatives. Nearly 1.3 million Khmer Krom live in the south. They face serious restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, movement and religion, community members say. Relatives of a 35-year-old Khmer Krom activist called Trieu Sieu told Radio Free Asia the Immigration Management Department of Soc Trang provincial police refused to issue a passport to him.'⁸⁷

10.4.8 At the time of writing in December 2024, there were 4 Khmer Krom recorded as detained across various databases^{88 89}. 3 were detained due to their religious activity and CPIT have included more details below in the relevant section on [Buddhists](#). The details of the remaining 1 show that they were detained for distributing books about indigenous peoples' rights⁹⁰ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).

⁸⁴ Change.org, [Release Khmer-Krom and Suspend Vietnam's Membership... UNHRC](#), 5 April 2024

⁸⁵ The KhmerPost USA LLC, [About](#), No date

⁸⁶ The KhmerPost USA LLC, [Khmer Krom People Do Not Have Freedom...](#), 31 July 2024

⁸⁷ RFA, [Vietnam intensifies repression of Khmer Krom, activists say](#), 2 June 2024

⁸⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

⁸⁹ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

⁹⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

11. Religious groups

11.1 Religious demography

11.1.1 The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) 2024 Annual Report, covering events in 2023, noted: 'Of Vietnam's population of approximately 100 million, around 86.3 percent identify as nonreligious, 6.1 percent as Catholic, 5.8 percent as Buddhist, one percent as Protestant, and 0.8 percent as adherents of other religions. As of August [2023], Vietnam recognized 46 religious organizations and 16 religions.'⁹¹

11.1.2 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

'The U.S. government estimates the total population at 104.8 million (midyear 2023). According to Vietnam's White Book on Religion published by the [Government Committee for Religious Affairs] GCRA in March 2023, there are approximately 26.5 million religious adherents as of December 2021, accounting for 27 percent of the total population at the time. The White Book noted Buddhism replaced Catholicism as the largest religious group in Vietnam since the prior census.

'... GCRA officials also estimated that 90 percent of the population followed some sort of faith tradition, registered or otherwise. According to observers, many religious adherents chose not to make their religious affiliation public for fear of adverse consequences, resulting in substantial discrepancies among various estimates.

'According to the GCRA, the total number of religious adherents reportedly more than doubled, from 13 million in the 2019 census data to 26.5 million in 2021.'⁹²

11.2 Buddhists

11.2.1 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

'According to the White Book, Buddhist membership increased from nearly 10 million in 2008 to approximately 14 million in 2021, accounting for 52.8 percent of the total number of religious believers nationwide and 13.3 percent of the overall population. The White Book did not specify whether the data recorded only Buddhists formally registered with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) or also included unregistered Buddhist groups such as the [Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam] UBCV. Within the Buddhist community, Mahayana Buddhism is the dominant affiliation of the Kinh (Viet) ethnic majority, while approximately 1 percent of the total population, almost all from the ethnic minority Khmer group, practices Theravada Buddhism.'⁹³

11.2.2 The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha is the government registered Buddhist group in Vietnam⁹⁴.

⁹¹ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 51), May 2024

⁹² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

⁹³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

⁹⁴ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 14), 2022

- 11.2.3 The Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs (GCRA), the 2022 GCRA report, noted in their report Religions and Religious Policy in Vietnam, published in 2022 that:

‘Concerning Buddhist education and training, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha currently has four Buddhist Institutes, 34 intermediate-level Buddhist schools, one Buddhist college, eight upper-intermediate classes, and hundreds of primary-level Buddhist classes at Buddhist temples, providing education from primary to intermediate, bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD degrees in Buddhist studies; it also sends hundreds of Buddhist students abroad.

‘... As of December 2021, the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha had 54,169 monks and nuns (including 40,095 Mahayana monks and nuns, 7,028 Khmer Theravada monks and nuns, 1,754 Kinh Theravada monks and nuns, and 5,284 mendicants), 18,544 places of worship, about 14 million devotees, and many people sympathizing with Buddhism.’⁹⁵

- 11.2.4 The 2022 DFAT report noted: ‘Most Buddhists practice Mahayana Buddhism (recognisable in Chinese and Japanese “Chan” or “Zen” Buddhism) but some Theravada Buddhists (more recognisable in South Asian expressions of Buddhism) from the ethnic Khmer community also practise in Vietnam.’⁹⁶
- 11.2.5 For information on Hoa Hao Buddhists please see the country policy and information note [Vietnam: Hoa Hao Buddhism](#).

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11.3 Catholics

- 11.3.1 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted: ‘According to the [Government Committee on Religious Affairs] GCRA, Catholics ranked as the second largest group with more than seven million followers, accounting for 6.6 percent of the total population. The Catholic population increased by a million followers since the 2019 census.’⁹⁷

- 11.3.2 The Catholic Church of Vietnam is the government registered Catholic group⁹⁸.

- 11.3.3 The 2022 GCRA report noted that:

‘As of December 2021, the Vietnamese Catholic Church had over 7 million followers, accounting for about 7% of the national population; two Cardinals (in the history of the Vietnamese Catholic Church, up to now, six bishops have been elevated to the rank of cardinal); three incumbent archbishops; 46 bishops; over 5,000 secular priests and order priests; around 32,000 monks and nuns; around 9,000 religious establishments (churches, religious houses, training centers, bishopric headquarters, religious orders); 11 educational establishments including one Catholic Institute, nine Grand Seminaries, and one branch of a Grand Seminary.’⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (pages 15 and 16), 2022

⁹⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.40), 11 January 2022

⁹⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

⁹⁸ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 18), 2022

⁹⁹ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 20), 2022

11.3.4 The 2022 DFAT report stated:

‘While Catholics reside in most districts, provinces and cities, the highest concentration is in central Vietnam (Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh Provinces). In-country sources report that Catholics are generally able to practise freely at registered churches, particularly in areas with larger Catholic populations.

‘... Most Catholics worship in churches as part of parishes. Some communities, particularly outside of cities, worship in homes of believers. These activities may be limited by authorities in some cases, but this differs from place to place. In general, Catholics in cities worship freely in churches.

‘Some Catholic communities are growing in size with evangelism or welfare efforts. This can occur especially where the local Catholic communities have good relationships with the Government. Some sources report that Catholic missionaries and officials have had difficulty reaching more remote parts of the country in recent years, which might be related to COVID-19 restrictions...’¹⁰⁰

11.3.5 See also [Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#)

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11.4 Protestants

11.4.1 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted: ‘According to the White Book, Protestants were the third largest group, with 1.2 million followers, accounting for 4.5 percent of the total number of believers nationwide and 1 percent of the overall population...’¹⁰¹

11.4.2 The same source noted: ‘...Based on adherents’ estimates, two-thirds of Protestants are members of ethnic minorities, including groups in the Northwest Highlands (H’mong, Dzao, Thai, and others) and in the Central Highlands (Ede, Jarai, Sedang, and M’ning, among others)...’¹⁰²

11.4.3 According to the 2022 GCRA report there were 11 Protestant organisations which had been recognized by the government as religious organisations and granted registration certificates for religious activities. They were:

- The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (North),
- The Evangelical Church of Vietnam (South),
- The Vietnam Christian Mission,
- The Baptist Churches in Vietnam,
- The Baptist Convention of Vietnam,
- The Presbyterian Church in Vietnam,
- The Mennonite Church in Vietnam,
- The Christian Fellowship Church in Vietnam,

¹⁰⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.22, 3.24-3.25), 11 January 2022

¹⁰¹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹⁰² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

- The Assemblies of God of Vietnam,
- The Vietnam Full Gospel Church,
- The Vietnam United Gospel Outreach Church¹⁰³.

11.4.4 The same report noted that: ‘As of December 2021, the country had over 1.2 million Protestants, more than 2,300 religious dignitaries, nearly 900 religious centers, nearly 100 organizations of different denominations, nearly 800 religiously dependent organizations, and about 5,500 small groups. There are about 9,000 foreigners practicing religion at 61 small groups.’¹⁰⁴

11.4.5 The 2022 DFAT report stated: ‘There is a wide-range of Protestant traditions present in Vietnam. Protestants are mostly members of ethnic minorities but Kinh Protestant communities also exist, especially in the south...’¹⁰⁵

11.4.6 See also [Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#) and [Hmong](#).

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11.5 Cao Daoists

11.5.1 USSD reported in their 2023 report on International Religious Freedom that approximately 1% of the population followed Cao Dai¹⁰⁶.

11.5.2 According to the 2022 GCRA report there were 10 Caodaist congregations and one Cao Dai sect recognised by the Vietnamese government and granted registration certificates for religious operations. They were:

- Cao Dai Tien Thien Church
- Cao Dai Minh Chon Church
- Cao Dai Chieu Minh Long Chau Church
- Cao Dai Missionary Church
- Cao Dai Tay Ninh Holy See
- Cao Dai Reform Section
- Cao Dai Bach Y Lien Doan Chon Ly Church
- Cao Dai Chon Ly Church
- Cao Dai Cau Kho - Tam Quan Church
- Vietnam Cao Dai Church (Binh Duc)
- Cao Dai Chieu Minh Tam Thanh Vo Vi (a religious sect of Caodaism)¹⁰⁷.

11.5.3 The same report went on to note that: ‘As of December 2021, Cao Dai Churches and organizations had over 1.2 million followers, more than 13,000 dignitaries, 26,000 officers, 1,300 religious establishments in 38 provinces and cities nationwide, with the majority concentrated in southern regions

¹⁰³ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (pages 22-24), 2022

¹⁰⁴ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 25), 2022

¹⁰⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.32), 11 January 2022

¹⁰⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹⁰⁷ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 27), 2022

such as Tay Ninh, Long An, Ben Tre, Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Thap, Tien Giang, Can Tho, Vinh Long, Kien Giang, Ca Mau, and An Giang.¹⁰⁸

- 11.5.4 The 2022 DFAT report noted: ‘Cao Dai is an indigenous syncretic religion established in the 1920s by Ngo Van Chieu who claimed to have spoken to God in a séance. The religion incorporates components of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism and Daoism. It is hierarchical (with Catholic influences) and has a pantheon of saints from various religious traditions. Its most famous symbol is an eye in a triangle symbol, which represents God.’¹⁰⁹

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11.6 Other religions

- 11.6.1 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘Smaller religious groups combined constitute less than 0.2 percent of the population and include Hindus (mostly an estimated 70,000 ethnic Cham in the south-central coastal area); approximately 80,000 Muslims scattered throughout the country (approximately 60 percent practice Bani Islam, and approximately 40 percent are Sunni); an estimated 3,000 members of the Baha’i Faith; and approximately 1,000 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (The Church of Jesus Christ). Religious groups originating in the country (Buu Son Ky Huong, Tu An Hieu Nghia, Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Dao, Tinh Do Cu Si Phat Hoi, and Phat Giao Hieu Nghia Ta Lon) comprise a total of 0.3 percent of the population. A small, mostly foreign, Jewish population resides in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.’¹¹⁰

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12. Law on belief and religion

12.1 Constitution

- 12.1.1 Article 24 of the Constitution states:

‘1. Everyone shall enjoy freedom of belief and of religion; he can follow any religion or follow none. All religions are equal before the law.

‘2. The State respects and protects freedom of belief and of religion.

‘3. No one has the right to infringe on the freedom of belief and religion or to take advantage of belief and religion to violate the laws.’¹¹¹

- 12.1.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted: ‘Vietnam is officially an atheist state. Article 24 of the Constitution nevertheless guarantees a right to freedom of belief and religion. In practice, religious groups are required to register with the Government and the authorities place restrictions on the day-to-day activities of some believers.’¹¹²

- 12.1.3 The 2022 GCRA report noted: ‘The right to freedom of belief and religion is always respected and guaranteed by the State of Vietnam and affirmed in

¹⁰⁸ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (page 29), 2022

¹⁰⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.46), 11 January 2022

¹¹⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹¹¹ Constitution of Vietnam, [Final Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam](#), 28 November 2013

¹¹² DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.13), 11 January 2022

the highest legally-binding document: the Constitution. Throughout the stages of national development, the Constitution of Vietnam has been amended, supplemented and improved to ensure better protection of the right to freedom of religion and belief of the people.¹¹³

- 12.1.4 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report noted: ‘Vietnam’s constitution states that citizens “can follow any religion or follow none” and that “all religions are equal before the law.” It also mandates respect and protection for freedom of belief and religion.’¹¹⁴

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12.2 Religious laws and regulations

- 12.2.1 The 2022 GCRA report noted that:

‘All believers have the right to freely practice their religion at home and at lawful places of worship in accordance with the law. Religious organizations recognized by the State are allowed to operate under the law and are protected by law. They are allowed to carry out religious activities, establish educational institutions to train dignitaries and religious practitioners, publish scriptures, and preserve, repair and build their own religious worship establishments in accordance with the law. Religious practices, preaching as well as all other religious activities must comply with the Constitution and the law; must not take advantage of religion to propagate evil faiths, conduct superstitious activities, and must not force people to follow a particular religion.’¹¹⁵

- 12.2.2 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

‘Vietnam’s 2018 Law on Belief and Religion restricts religious freedom and requires religious groups to register with the government in order to function legally. Additionally, religious groups must register and receive approval for all activities for the coming year.

‘In March [2023], Vietnam’s Government Committee for Religious Affairs released a “white book” on religious policies - its first such document in 16 years - to detail the state of religious communities within Vietnam as well as governmental attitudes and current laws on religious freedom. However, reports from independent religious groups indicate that this document fails to reflect the government’s persistent violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief...’¹¹⁶

- 12.2.3 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘According to the GCRA, the government recognizes 38 religious organizations that affiliate with 16 distinct “religious traditions” as defined by the government: Buddhism, Islam, the Baha’i Faith, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hoa Hao Buddhism, Cao Dai, Tinh Do Cu Si Phat Hoi, Tu An Hieu Nghia, Phat Duong Nam Tong Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Dao Tam Tong Mieu, Cham Brahmanism, Hieu Nghia Ta Lon Buddhism, and the Seventh-

¹¹³ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (pages 63 and 64), 2022

¹¹⁴ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 51), May 2024

¹¹⁵ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (pages 61/62 and 75), 2022

¹¹⁶ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 51), May 2024

day Adventist Church.

‘... The law specifies that recognized religious organizations and their affiliates are noncommercial legal entities. The law also stipulates that religious organizations are allowed to conduct educational, health, social protection, charitable, and humanitarian activities in accordance with relevant laws. The government does not allow unauthorized organizations to raise funds or distribute aid without seeking approval and registration from authorities.

‘The GCRA, one of 18 ministerial units under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), is responsible for implementing laws and decrees on religious affairs; it maintains offices at the central, provincial, and, in some areas, district levels. The law lays out specific responsibilities for central-, provincial-, and local-level GCRA offices and delegates certain religion-related management tasks to provincial- and local-level people’s committees (i.e., local government leaders). The central-level GCRA is charged with disseminating information to authorities and assuring uniform compliance with the legal framework on religion at the provincial, district, commune, and village levels.

‘The law prohibits forcing others to follow or renounce a religion or belief.

‘... The law requires individuals to register locations for collective religious practice – referred to as “meeting points” in Vietnamese law – with communal authorities where the “lawful premises for the religious practice is based.

‘... Under the law, a religious organization is defined as “a religious group that has received legal recognition” by authorities.

‘... Certain religious activities do not need advance approval but instead require notification to the appropriate authorities. Activities requiring notification include recurring or periodic “belief festivals”; dismissing clergy; conducting fundraising activities; reporting enrollment figures at a seminary or religious school; repairing or renovating religious facilities not considered cultural-historical relics; ordaining, appointing, or assigning religious clergy without administrative authority (such as monks); transferring or dismissing religious administrators (or clergy with administrative authority); conducting operations at an approved religious training facility; conducting routine religious activities (defined as “religious preaching, practicing religious tenets and rites, and management of a religious organization”); and holding the internal conferences of a religious organization.

‘... The law specifies that religious organizations must follow numerous other laws for certain activities. Religious organizations may conduct educational, health, charitable, and humanitarian activities in accordance with the law, but the law does not provide clarification as to which activities are permitted. In addition, construction or renovation of religious facilities must occur in accordance with laws and regulations on construction, and foreigners participating in religious activities must abide by immigration laws.

‘Publishing, producing, exporting, or importing religious texts must occur in accordance with laws and regulations related to publishing. Legislation requires all publishers be licensed public entities or state-owned enterprises. Publishers must receive prior government approval to publish all documents,

including religious texts. By decree, only the Religious Publishing House may publish religious books, although this is not enforced in all cases. Any bookstore may sell legally published religious texts and other religious materials.¹¹⁷

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12.3 Registration process

12.3.1 The 2022 GCRA report noted that:

‘To be registered for collective religious activities, a group of followers of a religious organization or an organization licensed for religious activities must satisfy the following conditions: having a lawful location for religious activities and a representative. Such a representative must be a Vietnamese citizen permanently residing in Vietnam, having full civil act capacity; not serving administrative sanctions in the field of belief and religion; having no criminal record or not being charged under the provisions of the legislation on criminal procedures.’¹¹⁸

12.3.2 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘A religious group may apply for recognition after it has operated continuously for at least five years following the date it receives approval of its “registration for religious operation.” A religious group is required to have a legal charter and bylaws, leaders in good standing without criminal records, and to have managed assets and conducted transactions autonomously. To obtain recognition, a group must submit a detailed application to the provincial- or national-level GCRA, depending on the geographic extent of the organization. The application must include a written request specifying the group’s structure, membership, geographical scope of operation and headquarters location; a summary of its history, dogmas, canon laws, and rites; a list and the resumes, judicial records, and summaries of the religious activities of the organization’s representative and tentative leaders; the group’s charter; a declaration of the organization’s lawful assets; and proof of lawful premises to serve as a headquarters.

‘... Authorities required most, if not all, applicants seeking registration of their religious group or recognition of their organization to include in their applications language stating the organization would be in harmony with the nation’s political ideology.

‘... Many religious groups continued to report that registration with local authorities remained difficult, particularly for new religious movements and groups with large numbers of ethnic minorities. On December 29, the government issued Decree 95, effective March 30, 2024, which will provide new limits on the discretion of local authorities in implementing the Law on Belief and Religion and provides a mechanism for the central government to suspend religious groups for “serious infractions” of the law.’¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹¹⁸ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, GCRA, [Religions and Religious Policy](#) (pages 61/62 and 75), 2022

¹¹⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

13. Treatment of religious groups

13.1 State attitude towards religious groups

13.1.1 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

'The extent of difficulty that a religious group could expect to face from authorities (for example, refusal of registration, questioning or disruption of activities) can depend on where they are located. Many claims of Government interference are at the hands of local and provincial authorities rather than national authorities. Attitudes and policies can differ between authorities.

'Many incidents relate to religious groups that are politically active in local land or environmental disputes. It can be difficult to distinguish between religious and political claims. The distinction is not necessarily apparent in the everyday experiences of religious adherents or the authorities, either or both of whom may see religious activity as inherently political.

'There are several high-profile examples of religious figures who have advocated for religious freedom and been imprisoned. Such cases are fewer in recent years but those who have been arrested and imprisoned in the past might still be under surveillance by authorities or summoned for regular interrogation. DFAT understands this is generally limited to questioning and surveillance and not violence.

'DFAT assesses that adherents of officially recognised religious groups are generally able to practise their faith with minimal interference from national authorities, but the situation differs from place to place. Those in large cities are particularly free to practise. Adherents associated with unregistered religious groups generally face more restrictions, which vary depending on region, ethnicity, and any perceived or actual involvement in religious freedom advocacy or political activism.'¹²⁰

13.1.2 According to the 2022-2023 VHRN report, regarding the state treatment towards the religious group, the government has suppressed its citizens' freedom of religion in various ways including:

'The criminalization of religious activities not following the state's policy with alleged crimes such as "sabotaging the implementation of solidarity policies" (Article 116 of the Criminal Law), "making, storing, and spreading information, materials, and items to oppose the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" (Art 117), "disturbing public order" (Article 318)... are apparent abuses of the Criminal Law to suppress the right to freedom of religion.

'... At the same time, with administrative orders, authorities in many localities continue to prevent religious gatherings and arrest participants.

'...The government often impedes the travel of religious dignitaries and bans religious gatherings that they consider incompatible with the ruling party's interests.

'...Furthermore, to limit the activities and influence of religious organizations, the government resorted to the 2013 Land Law, amended several times, to

¹²⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.17- 3.21), 11 January 2022

legalize the robbery of church properties, including schools, infirmaries, and social service facilities.¹²¹

13.1.3 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

‘Enforcement of the 2018 Law on Belief and Religion is plagued by uneven and inconsistent application throughout the country. While religious groups experience relatively greater freedom in urban areas, regardless of their registration or recognition status, serious challenges are pervasive in rural areas and provinces with significant ethnic minority communities, such as those in the Central Highlands and An Giang Province. As of December 2023, the Vietnamese government had not released drafts of the law’s two implementing decrees, which would clarify how the government interprets and enforces it.’¹²² Decree 95/2023/NP-CP guiding the Law on Belief and Religion was released on 29 December 2023¹²³.

13.1.4 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘According to the GCRA, by year’s end, authorities registered more than 3,700 out of approximately 5,000 meeting points across the country, including more than 60 for foreign nationals. The GCRA did not report province-level statistics. The GCRA estimated that more than 80 new religious movements and activities with various origins operated outside of the legal framework mandated by the [Law on Belief and Religion] LBR. These groups neither sought nor received registration certificates or recognition during the year.

‘... There were continued reports authorities intervened in the election or appointment of leaders for several religious organizations. These included vetting lists of candidates, questioning candidates, and pressuring the leaders of religious organizations to accept candidates the government deemed acceptable.

‘Authorities continued to impose a rigid upper-management structure on religious organizations, according to reports from local religious leaders. Religious community representatives said authorities preferred a two-level, top-down hierarchy to better control the religious organization and its affiliates through the group’s internal administrative structure.

‘There were continued reports of local authorities requiring a list of all members and their biographies from religious groups seeking registration, and extensive biographical information about their extended families. Religious leaders expressed concern that the lists, which were not required by law, would be used to target members for harassment or limit the ability of groups to register new members in the future.’¹²⁴

13.1.5 The Vietnam delegation representing the government of Vietnam, in response to statements and recommendations from 113 countries submitted to the Working Group as part of the Universal Periodic Review process, told the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that:

¹²¹ VHRN, [Report on Human Rights in Vietnam 2022-2023](#), 18 November 2023

¹²² USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 51), May 2024

¹²³ LawNet, [Decree No. 95/2023/ND-CP guiding the Law on Beliefs and Religions](#), 29 December 2023

¹²⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

‘Viet Nam respected and protected the freedom of religion or belief for everyone. All religions were equal before the law, and discrimination on the basis of religion and belief was prohibited. Legal documents had been continuously amended or newly issued to better guide the implementation of the Law on Belief and Religion and facilitate religious activities. Since the adoption of the 2024 Land Law, land-use fees for places of worship and religious organizations had been waived. Since 2019, there had been an increase in official registration of qualified religious organizations and places of worship or religious practices, with special attention given to ethnic minorities and those in mountainous areas. Viet Nam took pride in its diverse religious life and maintained its consistent policies to respect and protect freedom of religion and belief, ensuring equal treatment between religions. The coexistence of religions and beliefs in harmony contributed to national development. Viet Nam was committed to further improving the protection of everyone’s freedom of belief and religion under Vietnamese law.’¹²⁵

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13.2 Treatment of unregistered groups

13.2.1 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘A key distinction is between registered and unregistered faith groups. ...Registered groups worship with limited or no Government interference; those that are not registered may be pressured by Government to join the registered group. Among unregistered groups a further distinction can be made between those groups that have some (perceived) political or foreign agenda and those that do not. Different people of different religions in different areas will also have different experiences, depending on local authorities. Those in cities are less likely to experience official interference.’¹²⁶

13.2.2 A Joint Submission by several groups to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) noted:

‘In some Vietnamese provinces, denial of household registration and national ID documents is used as a punishment against those in unrecognized religious groups. This renders them "stateless" within their own country, stripping away basic citizenship rights, limiting mobility, and denying access to essential services like education and healthcare. They cannot secure land rights, own property, open bank accounts, use public services, get official jobs, start businesses, and have legal recourse due to the absence of identifying documents. We have identified or been informed of over two thousand H’Mong and Montagnard Christian households, accounting for some 10,000 individuals, that have been rendered stateless because of their religious faith.’¹²⁷

13.2.3 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

‘... government authorities continue to monitor all religious activity closely, often harassing, detaining, or otherwise preventing unregistered faith

¹²⁵ UN HRC, [Report of the working group on the Universal Periodic Review](#) (page 6), 21 June 2024

¹²⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.15), 11 January 2022

¹²⁷ BPSOS et al, [Alternative report to the UN CERD in addition to the Government...](#), September 2023

communities from exercising their fundamental right to religious freedom.

‘Throughout 2023, authorities used this law [2018 Law on Belief and Religion] to shut down religious services of unregistered independent groups. Groups wishing to register continued to experience difficulty, and many unregistered groups complained that authorities have rejected or ignored their registration applications without explanation.’¹²⁸

13.2.4 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘Religious leaders reported local authorities continued to obstruct the assignment and transfer of religious leaders to unregistered local congregations, particularly leaders assigned to areas outside of their home provinces or leaders the government considered outspoken on social and political issues.

‘Sources stated that authorities limited the freedom of movement or right to leave the country of many religious freedom advocates and representatives of unregistered religious groups through exit bans or withholding passport issuance.

‘The law provides a separate process for unregistered, unrecognized religious groups to receive permission for specific religious activities by applying to the commune-level people’s committee.

‘... Government officials in different parts of the country reportedly continued to monitor, interrogate, arbitrarily detain, intimidate, and discriminate against individuals, at least in part because of their religious beliefs or affiliation. A majority of the victims of the reported incidents were members of unregistered groups engaged in political or human rights advocacy activities, had ties to overseas individuals and organizations that were outspoken and critical of authorities, or were affiliated with new religious movements. ... The GCRA estimated there were more than 85 new religious movements or phenomena that it described as “evil-way” or “strange” religions.

‘... The law required an unregistered religious group to have legal premises to register a “meeting point.” Many religious leaders stated that they could not obtain the certificate indicating they had a legal premises because unregistered religious groups could not buy or rent property. There were reports authorities intervened with property owners or notary offices to prevent unregistered religious groups from securing legal premises or obtain a certificate indicating they had a legal premise. Given the legal and administrative barriers to buying or renting property in the name of religious groups, there were reports of religious groups buying or renting their members’ private properties as an alternative.

‘Authorities attributed delays and denials of registration applications to applicants’ completing forms incorrectly or providing incomplete information. Religious groups said the process of registering groups or notifying authorities of activities in new or remote locations was particularly difficult. Some religious groups reported that authorities urged them to register as affiliates of recognized religious groups instead of as new groups.

¹²⁸ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 51), May 2024

‘GCRA officials stated that government officials assisted unregistered religious groups in navigating the bureaucratic procedures required for registration using features such as an interactive portal on the GCRA website that allowed religious organizations to track the status of their document submissions. The GCRA, however, acknowledged the web portal was not useful for remote religious groups, which often lacked the ability to utilize the digital forms provided by the government. The GCRA continued to provide provincial-level training to facilitate local registration of religious groups.

‘... Sources stated that authorities monitored, prevented, or disrupted the gatherings of banned and some unregistered religious groups and harassed their members, including through confiscating their property, intimidation, questioning, and restricting their movement. There were reports of local authorities interrupting religious services due to alleged registration or permitting issues.

‘There were reports that local authorities in Dien Bien and Lai Chau Provinces prevented and disrupted Sunday services of ethnic minority congregations affiliated to banned group Ba Co Do (Church of God Loving Us). There were several reports of local officials violently removing key members of these groups away from religious services, causing the members minor injuries when they refused to cooperate.

‘... Similar to prior years, religious leaders in urban areas – of both registered and unregistered groups – stated that authorities generally permitted them to practice as long as they acted in accordance with legal and administrative requirements that applied to religious organizations.

‘... Unrecognized religious denominations operating in the Central and Northwest Highlands and in certain parts of the Mekong Delta – especially those that had a predominantly ethnic minority following – more frequently reported harassment from government officials than other religious groups. Recognized religious denominations in these areas continued to report rapid growth and generally fewer problems with officials.

‘... Sources reported that many members of religious groups targeted for harassment were also involved in human rights advocacy activities or had links to individuals and organizations that were critical of the government. Central government authorities generally denied allegations of abuse of religious freedom. Although officials said the government would punish authorities who violated the rights of religious believers, there were no public reports that authorities took disciplinary actions against government officials violating religious freedom protections guaranteed by the law.¹²⁹

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13.3 Religion among ethnic minority groups

13.3.1 Open Development Vietnam noted in August 2023 that:

‘Most ethnic minorities still maintain traditional beliefs, worship polytheism – following animism concepts and worshipping according to traditional customs

¹²⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

– often stated as non-religious – with 83.4% of the EM population, and only 16.6% follow specific religions.

‘... Before 1990, only a small number of [Ethnic Minorities] EMs practised religions, mainly the Khmer who followed Theravada Buddhism; the Cham who followed Brahmanism and Islam; some ethnic groups in the Central Highlands (Ba Na, Xo Dang, Gia Rai) and some in the Northwest (H’Mong) who followed Catholicism; the Dao who followed Protestantism. Over time, religions gradually penetrated EM areas, forming religious communities. As of 2019, the number of EM religious followers in Vietnam has increased significantly. Currently, 3,025,174 people from 33 EM groups are religious followers. These people are distributed mainly in Buddhism (1,448,366 followers), Catholicism (548,130 followers), Protestantism (874,359 followers), Islam (85,452 followers), and other religions (69,592 followers).

‘... Besides the religions recognized by the Government, many strange and new religious phenomena appeared among the EM communities in Vietnam, mainly in the Northern mountainous areas and the Central Highlands. In particular, the phenomena in the Northern regions include Duong Van Minh, Pha Toc, San Su Khe To, Se Chu Ha Ly Cha (Xe A), Je Sua, Ba Co Du, Eternal Salvation, etc. The Central Highlands region has phenomena such as Ha Mon, Charismatic Renewal, Dega Protestant, Amí Sara, Po Khap Brau, Jesus Christ’s Cross (Cross, Lord of the Rising Sun), Evangelical Church of Christ Vietnam, Vietnam and USA Lutheran Union Church, etc.

‘Over the last decades, the Government of Vietnam has recognized hundreds of affiliated religious organizations among EM communities (most of which are Protestant and Catholic organizations). As for the “strange” and “new” religious phenomena, the Government is cautious in monitoring, managing and licensing activities, sometimes causing controversies over religious freedom.’¹³⁰

13.3.2 Open Doors, a US based Christian group¹³¹, noted in their Vietnam full country dossier published in January 2024 noted that: ‘The Journal of Party Building stated in an article dated 28 July 2022 that out of 1.2 million Protestants throughout Vietnam, 73% belong to ethnic minorities, roughly one third living in the northern mountainous region and two thirds in the Central Highlands.’¹³²

13.3.3 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘NGOs and members of religious groups continued to report cases of government officials physically abusing, intimidating, and harassing individuals from religious minority groups, particularly ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and Northern Highlands, although because religion, ethnicity, and politics were often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity. In the Northwest and Northern Highlands, leaders representing both registered and unregistered religious groups said authorities frequently used nonviolent or less physically aggressive means as compared with prior years. For

¹³⁰ Open Development Vietnam, [Religions of Ethnic minorities in Vietnam](#), 28 August 2023

¹³¹ Open Doors, [About Us](#), no date

¹³² Open Doors, [Vietnam: Full Country Dossier](#), January 2024

example, authorities summoned representatives for periodic meetings or threatened or imposed administrative fines to pressure them to comply with government demands, including seeking registration and ceasing illegal gatherings.

‘... According to state media, authorities from the central to the local levels established numerous interagency task forces led by public security offices to combat unregistered religious groups deemed to be “evil-way” religions, antistate groups under the cover of religion, “affiliates to hostile forces,” or new religious movements and phenomena. Such groups include Duong Van Minh, Ba Co Do (Hoi Thanh Duc Chua Troi Yeu Thuong Chung Ta), World Mission Society Church of God (Hoi Thanh Duc Chua Troi Me), Evangelical Church of Christ (Tin Lanh Dang Christ Tay Nguyen), and Church of Jesus (Dao Gie Sua). Authorities accused these banned religious groups and their members of doing harm to traditional practices or “fine cultural values,” or having political motives, such as inciting social unrest, disrupting solidarity policies, and separatism. Members of these groups reported that local officials, government-affiliated social organizations, community-based organizations, and community members harassed them and coerced them to recant their faith. There were reports of communities and families boycotting and displacing members of banned religious groups because they did not share the same faith.’¹³³

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14. State treatment of specific religious groups

14.1 Buddhists

14.1.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Khmer Krom](#). Reference should also be made to the Country Policy and Information Note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes. For information on Hoa Hao Buddhism see Country Policy and Information Note on [Vietnam: Hoa Hao Buddhism](#).

14.1.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘Groups registered with the Government experience few restrictions. High-profile Buddhist exiles and arrestees are typically also involved in advocating political change, such as for religious freedom. It can be difficult to separate out discrimination due to religion and political opinion in these cases.

‘DFAT assesses that Buddhists who belong to registered organisations and are not politically active face a low risk of official discrimination. Those engaged in independent sects or unregistered Buddhist organisations face a moderate risk of official discrimination, particularly if they also advocate for political change, including for religious freedom.’¹³⁴

14.1.3 Radio Free Asia reported in January 2024 that:

‘A week after arresting its abbot, Vietnamese authorities on Monday demolished a lecture hall linked to a Buddhist pagoda serving the Khmer Krom indigenous people in southern Vietnam, claiming it was built illegally in

¹³³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹³⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.41- 3.42), 11 January 2022

2020.

'The lecture hall did not have the proper permit at the time of its construction, another resident told RFA.

'The Khmer Krom indigenous community, numbering about 1.3 million people, live in a part of Vietnam that was once southeastern Cambodia. They face discrimination in Vietnam and suspicion in Cambodia, where they are often perceived not as Cambodians but as Vietnamese.

'Police were out in force during the demolition to prevent Khmer Krom from trying to stop the excavators by occupying the building, a Khmer Krom woman told RFA Khmer.

'The Khmer Kampuchea Krom Federation said that the actions of the Vietnamese authorities were discriminatory and that the authorities aim to eradicate the Khmer Krom people.'¹³⁵

14.1.4 Radio Free Asia reported in April 2024 that:

'In late March [2024], Vietnamese police in Vinh Long province arrested four Buddhist monks and an activist from the Khmer Krom indigenous group during a raid at Dai Tho Pagoda, known as the Tro Nom Sek pagoda in Khmer language.

'Two days before that raid, police arrested the head of the pagoda, Thach Chanh Da Ra, and two other followers. The dispute between local authorities and the pagoda dates back to November and has resulted in several other arrests, as well as the destruction of a lecture hall linked to the pagoda.'¹³⁶

14.1.5 In April 2024 the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) open letter to the United Nations Secretary General on change.org noted:

'In addition to the targeting of activists, on March 26 and March 28, 2024, Vietnamese authorities arrested and defrocked revered Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks, including Venerable Thach Chanh Da Ra, Venerable Duong Khai, Venerable Thach Qui Lay, Venerable Kim Sa Ruong, and Venerable Thach Chop, of the Tro Nom Sek temple in Dai Tho hamlet, Long My village, Tam Binh District, Vinh Long province. They are being detained under the charge of Article 331. These spiritual leaders, known for their commitment to peace and justice, have been subjected to harassment and intimidation simply for practicing and promoting their faith without being controlled by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), which is a Buddhist organization created and regulated by the government. Such actions constitute a blatant violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Additionally, Vietnamese authorities arrested Mr. Thach Ve Sanal and Mr. Thach Nha, detained under the charge of "illegal arrest, detention, or imprisonment of a person" (as per Article 157), merely for aiding in the defense of the Tro Nom Sek temple during an attack by local gang members on November 22, 2023.

'Furthermore, on April 1, 2024, Vietnam demolished a sacred religious site of the Khmer-Krom community, including a religious hall in Tong Hung hamlet,

¹³⁵ RFA, [Vietnam demolishes a lecture hall linked to Khmer Krom pagoda](#), 1 April 2024

¹³⁶ RFA, [Khmer Krom demonstrate in Phnom Penh against raids, arrests in Vietnam](#), 24 April 2024

Loan My village, Tam Binh District, Vinh Long province. This act of cultural and religious desecration not only deprives the Khmer-Krom people of their places of worship but also constitutes a grave violation of their cultural heritage and identity.¹³⁷

14.1.6 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

‘In November [2023], nonuniformed Vietnamese authorities disrupted a Khmer language class at a Khmer Krom Buddhist temple, attacking the abbot and two Buddhist followers. Reports from independent religious groups noted that the government restricts the import of religious literature printed in certain Hmong alphabets to the Central Highlands.

‘... The government pressured the independent ... Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, ... to join their state-controlled counterparts, preventing them from practicing their faith freely. Authorities seized religious properties and gave them to state-controlled religious groups.

‘... In July [2023], authorities arrested Khmer Krom Buddhists Danh Minh Quang and Thach Cuong - with whom USCIRF had met during its May visit to Vietnam - and in August they arrested To Hoang Chuong, charging all three for violating Article 331 of the Vietnam Criminal Code...’¹³⁸

14.1.7 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted: ‘Male Khmer Krom Buddhists traditionally enter the monastery for a period of at least one month before age 20. Adherents reported that mandatory conscription into the military from the age of 18 to 25 (or up to age 27 in the case of college graduates) with no possibility of alternative service interfered with this traditional religious rite of passage.’¹³⁹

14.1.8 The 88 Project, a human rights advocacy group, produced a database of ‘persecuted activists’ in Vietnam. Persecuted activists includes political prisoners and those that the 88 Project define as ‘activists at risk’. ‘Activists at risk’ is defined by the 88 Project as those not detained but who have suffered from harassment including, physical attacks, administrative fines, forced eviction and passport denials. It also includes those who have been released from detention but remain under surveillance. According to their website the list is produced using first-hand information, articles confirming arrests/charges/sentences from state-owned media, information from independent media/ Vietnamese human rights organizations/ social media pages of activists in Vietnam, information from international media and cross checking with existing databases of political prisoners¹⁴⁰.

14.1.9 At the time of writing in December 2024, the 88 Project listed the details of 45 Buddhists. 5 are listed as being ‘at risk, 5 are listed as ‘likely released - at risk’, 4 were listed as deceased, and 7 were listed as being ‘released - at risk’. 24 Buddhists are listed as being currently detained. 14 of those on the list belonged to the An Dan Dai Dao Buddhist group and of the remaining 10 listed, the details of 3 appear to show their arrests were unrelated to their religion, with one specifically related to their affiliation with a pro-democracy

¹³⁷ Change.org, [Release Khmer-Krom and Suspend Vietnam's Membership... UNHRC](#), 5 April 2024

¹³⁸ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 50-51), May 2024

¹³⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

¹⁴⁰ The 88 Project, [Database- FAQ](#), no date

group¹⁴¹ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).

- 14.1.10 USCIRF produces the ‘Frank R Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’, which records victims targeted due to their religion or belief and includes those currently detained, those released, those who have died in custody and those whose whereabouts are unknown. According to their website the list is compiled using USCIRF ongoing monitoring, communication with those affected and organisations that focus on religious freedom. USCIRF go on to note however that: ‘... due to the policies of foreign governments and the lack of independent news and human rights organizations in the countries represented in this database, it is difficult to obtain, confirm, and verify comprehensive information about all victims¹⁴².
- 14.1.11 At the time of writing in December 2024, the list records the details of 31 Buddhists. Of the 31, 2 were recorded as having died in custody, 4 were recorded as having been released from detention and the remaining 25 were recorded as still being detained. 16 of those recorded as detained were of Kinh ethnicity and were members of An Dan Dai Dao religious group and all were arrested in 2012¹⁴³.
- 14.1.12 Using information from the USCIRF list and the 88 Project list CPIT have produced the table below showing the details of those recorded as detained for their religious belief/activity. The personal details, details of the date of arrest, date released, and arrest/charges are the same on both databases unless otherwise stated. Those highlighted in purple should have been released from detention but, as of December 2024, are still recorded on at least 1 database as detained. This could be because the individual is still detained, their location unknown, or the sources had no up-to-date information regarding the individual’s actual release.

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Nguyen Ky Lac Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁴⁴ <small>145</small>	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years’ probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People’s Administration"
Name: Vo Tiet Ethnic group: Kinh	February 2012	Still detained.	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years’ probation

¹⁴¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁴² USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁴³ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁴⁴ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁴⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao		On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁴⁶ ¹⁴⁷	for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Vo Thanh Le Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁴⁸ ¹⁴⁹	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"

¹⁴⁶ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

¹⁴⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁴⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

¹⁴⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Vuong Tan Son Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁵⁰ 151	Sentenced to 17 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Vo Ngoc Cu Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁵² 153	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Tran Quan Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁵⁴ 155	Sentenced to 13 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Tran Phi Dung Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁵⁶ 157	Sentenced to 13 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"

¹⁵⁰ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁵¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁵² USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁵³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁵⁴ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁵⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁵⁶ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁵⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Ta Khu Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁵⁸ ¹⁵⁹	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Le Duy Loc Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁶⁰ ¹⁶¹	The 88 project state he was sentenced to 17 years in prison ¹⁶² but the USCIRF state that there are conflicting reports about whether he was convicted to 12 or 17 years in prison ¹⁶³ . Both state he was also sentenced to 5 years' probation along with his prison sentence for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"

¹⁵⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

¹⁵⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁶⁰ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

¹⁶¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁶² The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁶³ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Doan Van Cu Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵	Sentenced to 14 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Le Phuc ¹⁶⁶ , also recorded as Le Xuan Phuc ¹⁶⁷ Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹	Sentenced to 15 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Le Trong Cu Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	February 2012	Meant to be released February 2024. The USCIRF list him as still detained ¹⁷⁰ . The 88 Project list him as likely released ¹⁷¹ .	Sentenced to 12 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"

¹⁶⁴ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁶⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁶⁶ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁶⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁶⁸ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁶⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁷⁰ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁷¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Luong Nhat Quang Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	March 2012	Meant to be released March 2024. The USCIRF list him as still detained ¹⁷² . The 88 Project list him as likely released ¹⁷³ .	Sentenced to 12 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Tu Thien Luong Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	November 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵	Sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Nguyen Thai Binh Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	November 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁷⁶ ¹⁷⁷	Sentenced to 12 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"

¹⁷² USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁷³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁷⁴ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁷⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁷⁶ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁷⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Nguyen Dinh Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	November 2012	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁷⁸ ¹⁷⁹	Sentenced to 14 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration"
Name: Phan Thanh Y Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: An Dan Dai Dao	November 2012	Listed on the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁸⁰ . Listed on the USCIRF list as released in late 2021 and they record that he has passed away ¹⁸¹	Sentenced to 14 years in prison and 5 years' probation for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Administration".
Name: Le Tung Van Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	January 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained under house arrest ¹⁸² ¹⁸³	Sentenced to 5 years in prison charged with "abusing democratic freedoms"

¹⁷⁸ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁷⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁸⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁸¹ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁸² USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

¹⁸³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Le Thanh Hoan Nguyen Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	January 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Le Thanh Trung Duong Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	January 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁸⁶ ¹⁸⁷	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Le Thanh Nhat Nguyen Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	January 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁹	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Cao Thi Cuc Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	May 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁹⁰ ¹⁹¹	Sentenced to 3 years in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”

¹⁸⁴ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁸⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁸⁶ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁸⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁸⁸ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁸⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁹⁰ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁹¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Le Thanh Nhi Nguyen Ethnic group: Kinh Religious group: Tinh That Bong Lai Buddhist Monastery/ Thien Am Ben Bo Vu Tru	May 2022	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁹² 193	Sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Dahn Minh Quang Ethnic group: Khmer Krom Religious Group: Khmer Krom Buddhist	July 2023	Still detained. On the USCIRF list as detained ¹⁹⁴ . Not listed on the 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Thach Cuong Ethnic group: Khmer Krom Religious group: Khmer Krom Buddhist	July 2023	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁹⁵ 196	Sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”

¹⁹² USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁹³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁹⁴ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁹⁵ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁹⁶ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: To Hoang Chuong Ethnic group: Khmer Krom Religious group: Khmer Krom Buddhist	July 2023	Still detained. On both the USCIRF and the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁹⁷ ¹⁹⁸	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms”
Name: Dinh Thi Huynh Ethnic group: Khmer Krom Religious group: Khmer Krom Buddhist	August 2023	Still detained. Listed on the 88 Project list as detained ¹⁹⁹ . Not listed on the USCIRF list.	Charged under article 380- failure to serve a judgment. There are no further details.

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14.2 Catholics

14.2.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#). Reference should also be made to the Country Policy and Information Note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes.

14.2.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘The Catholic Church is, by definition, united and can deal with the Government at a national level across Vietnam. Provincial authorities might also have relationships at the diocesan level; sometimes local relationships are better than the national level relationship. In general, relationships between the Government and the Church are cordial. Individual parishes need to be registered.

‘... There have been Catholic political movements that attract negative attention from authorities. The distinction between faith and politics can be difficult to draw. Examples include where Catholics are involved in political, human rights or environmental movements. For example, priests that are involved in those movements may be restricted from public ministry or given a far-away parish assignment. Participation in non-religious activities differs from diocese to diocese and parish to parish.

¹⁹⁷ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

¹⁹⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

¹⁹⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

'The "Red Flag Association", a militant pro-Government movement allegedly under the direction of local governments, was reported to have disbanded in 2018. Red Flag Association activity included protests outside Catholic churches. In-country sources told DFAT that these protests have not occurred in the last two years and that such activity is now more likely to be online.

'Land disputes have been reported, including the seizure of Catholic land and buildings. A particularly prominent example occurred in 2019 when a number of homes and a Catholic church were demolished and the land sold. Appropriated land might be sold to the private sector for development. Conversely, much of the land that was seized from the Church in the aftermath of the Vietnam War has been returned over decades. That process continues, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, reportedly in return for cooperation of the Church with authorities during the pandemic.

'DFAT assesses that Catholics who belong to registered churches and are not politically active face a low risk of official harassment. In-country sources told DFAT that, in general, Catholics are able to worship freely and receive sacraments such as the Eucharist, Reconciliation (confession) and Confirmation. Some Catholics in remote areas have trouble accessing a priest who may not be able to travel to remote areas, whether because authorities will not allow it or because of the remoteness. Catholics who are perceived to challenge the authority or interests of the [Communist Party of Vietnam] CPV and its policies, particularly through political activism, face a moderate risk of official discrimination from authorities or their proxies, which may include arrest or violence.'²⁰⁰

14.2.3 Open Doors noted in their Vietnam full country dossier published in January 2024 that:

'Historical Christian communities (such as Roman Catholic churches) enjoy a certain amount of freedom unless they become politically active which can lead to imprisonment (e.g. in land-grabbing cases or environmental issues). Where Catholic congregations own large plots of land (e.g. surrounding convents, schools or hospitals) these are sometimes confiscated by state authorities for development purposes. On rare occasions when initiated by local party leaders, Catholics can become targets of state interference, as has happened in March 2023 when state officials interrupted a Catholic church service.'²⁰¹

14.2.4 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

'Despite the Vatican-Vietnam agreement on appointing the resident papal representative in Vietnam in 2023, Vietnamese Catholics expressed concern that the government will maintain control over Catholic leaders, including during religious services. The government also continued to harass Catholic priests, including in ethnic minority areas. In April, authorities in Kon Tum Province prevented a Catholic priest from conducting religious activities. In

²⁰⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.31), 11 January 2022

²⁰¹ Open Doors, [Vietnam: Full Country Dossier](#), January 2024

August, authorities prevented two Hmong Catholic priests from publicly holding religious services.²⁰²

14.2.5 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘There were government and international media reports of local authorities banning and/or disrupting gatherings and confiscating publications of various religious groups. These included well-established groups such as the Catholic Church...

‘... According to Catholic leaders, parishes in remote areas or with majority ethnic minority populations continued to face difficulty registering with provincial authorities due to an inconsistent application of national laws. Catholic leaders reported that the most problematic regions were in the Central Highlands (Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Kon Tum, and Lam Dong Provinces) and the Northwest Highlands, including Hoa Binh, Son La, Lao Cai, and Yen Bai Provinces.

‘... Media sources continued to report tension and disputes between Catholics and authorities in many areas, including Hanoi, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Thua Thien Hue, Ha Nam, and Binh Thuan Provinces, mostly regarding land disputes or relating to the activities of human and environmental rights advocacy groups.²⁰³

14.2.6 The website Campaign to Abolish torture in Vietnam (CAT-VN) a civil society organisation who monitor and report instances of torture and mistreatment of detainees and prisoners in Vietnam²⁰⁴, produced a list of Montagnard prisoners of conscience published in February 2022. The list was compiled using various publicly available information from non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch, from US State Department reports and news reports, some of which are in Vietnamese. Some of the information dates back to at least 2002²⁰⁵. It is not clear from the list whether the information from these sources has been independently verified by CAT-VN, or whether CAT-VN has reproduced and collated already available information. At the time of writing in December 2024 the list detailed nearly 90 Montagnards imprisoned or placed under post-release probationary restrictions. 21 were Catholics, 11 of the Catholics listed were recorded as being in ‘post release probation/house arrest’. 10 of the Catholics listed were recorded as being detained, however the list is from February 2022 and some of those listed were due to be released in 2022/2023²⁰⁶.

14.2.7 At the time of writing in December 2024, the 88 Project listed the details of 59 Catholics (including those recorded as Ha Mon religion). 24 were listed as ‘at risk’, 4 were listed as ‘likely released-at risk’, 20 were listed as ‘released-at risk’ and 3 were listed as ‘released-exiled’. 3 from the Ha Mon religion were recorded as being in pre-trial detention. 5 Catholics were listed as sentenced to prison, all 5 were of Kinh ethnicity. However, the details of all 5 show that they were sentenced to prison for their perceived opposition to the

²⁰² USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (page 50), May 2024

²⁰³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

²⁰⁴ CAT-VN, [What we do](#), no date

²⁰⁵ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience \(Sources and Endnotes\)](#), February 2022

²⁰⁶ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

state²⁰⁷ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).

- 14.2.8 At the time of writing in December 2024, the USCIRF Frank R Wolf Freedom of Religion or belief Victims List recorded the details of 11 Catholics who were detained for their religious belief and/or activity. The whereabouts of 5 were unknown, all 5 were Montagnards belonging to the Ha Mon Catholic Church. One person was recorded as being released from detention, they were of Kinh ethnicity. 5 people were recorded as still being detained; all were Montagnards belonging to the Ha Mon Catholic Church²⁰⁸.
- 14.2.9 Using information from the USCIRF list, the CAT-VN list and the 88 Project list, CPIT have produced the table below showing the details of those recorded as detained for their religious belief/activity. The personal details, details of the date of arrest, date released, and arrest/charges are the same on all databases unless otherwise stated. Those highlighted in purple should have been released from detention but, as of December 2024, are still recorded on at least 1 database as detained. This could be because the individual is still detained, their location unknown, or the sources had no up-to-date information regarding the individual's actual release.

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: A Tach Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Ha Mon	October 2012	Meant to be released in 2023. Recorded on USCIRF list and CAT-VN list as detained although the CAT-VN list was published before his scheduled release date ^{209 210} . The 88 Project list stated he was 'likely released' but no release date recorded ²¹¹ .	Sentenced in May 2013 to 11 years imprisonment and 3-5 years probation for "undermining national unity policy"

²⁰⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁰⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁰⁹ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²¹⁰ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²¹¹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Runh</p> <p>Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Ha Mon</p>	<p>April 2012</p>	<p>Meant to be released in 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022²¹².</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²¹³.</p> <p>The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released'²¹⁴.</p>	<p>In May 2013 sentenced to 10 years in prison and 3-5 years probation for "undermining national unity".</p>

²¹² CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²¹³ USCIRF, [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), no date

²¹⁴ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Run</p> <p>Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Ha Mon</p>	<p>2013^{215 216}. The 88 Project list his arrest as August 2012²¹⁷.</p>	<p>Meant to be released in 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022²¹⁸.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²¹⁹.</p> <p>The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released'²²⁰.</p>	<p>In 2013 sentenced to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years probation for "undermining national unity".</p>
<p>Name: A Kuin</p> <p>Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Ha Mon</p>	<p>2013</p>	<p>Meant to be released 2023.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022²²¹.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²²².</p> <p>Not recorded on the 88 Project list.</p>	<p>Sentenced to 9 years and 6 months in prison and 3-5 years probation for "undermining national unity".</p>

²¹⁵ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²¹⁶ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²¹⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²¹⁸ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²¹⁹ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²²⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²²¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²²² USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: A Jen Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Ha Mon	October 2015	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated 2022 ^{223 224} . He is not recorded on the 88 Project list ²²⁵ .	Arrested October 2015 for participating with unregistered Ha Mon Catholic Church, in 2016 sentenced to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years probation.
Name: A Tik Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Ha Mon	October 2015	Meant to be released in 2023. Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated February 2022 ²²⁶ . USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown' ²²⁷ . The 88 Project have no release date recorded and list his current status as 'sentenced to prison' ²²⁸ .	Arrested for participating in Ha Mon, a religious group not approved by the government. Charged with "undermining national unity policy" and sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years probation.

²²³ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²²⁴ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²²⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²²⁶ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²²⁷ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²²⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Dinh Kuh</p> <p>Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Ha Mon</p> <p>The 88 Project have details for a Dinh Ku but CPIT were unable to verify whether this was the same person as the arrest and release details were different and no photograph of Dinh Ku was provided on the 88 Project database²²⁹.</p>	October 2015	<p>Meant to be released in 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated February 2022²³⁰.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²³¹.</p>	Arrested for participating in Ha Mon, a religious group not approved by the government. Charged with "undermining national unity policy" and sentenced to 7 years in prison and 3-5 years probation.
<p>Name: Lup</p> <p>Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Ha Mon</p> <p>The 88 Project photo for Lup is the photo that CAT-VN have referring to Ju, USCIRF do not have photos for either individual. All other details are the same.</p>	March 2020	Still detained-pre-trial detention. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ^{232 233 234} .	There are no details of his sentence or the nature of any charges brought against him.

²²⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²³⁰ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²³¹ USCIRF, [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), no date

²³² USCIRF, [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#), no date

²³³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²³⁴ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Kunh Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Ha Mon	March 2020	Still detained-pre-trial detention. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ^{235 236 237} .	As above
Name: Ju (listed as Jur on the 88 Project database ²³⁸) Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Ha Mon The 88 Project photo for Ju (or Jur) is the photo that CAT-VN have referring to Lup, USCIRF do not have photos for either individual. All other details are the same.	March 2020	Still detained-pre-trial detention. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ^{239 240 241} .	As above

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14.3 Protestants

14.3.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on the state treatment of [Montagnards \(or Degar\)](#) and [Hmong](#). Reference should also be made to the Country Policy and Information Note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#) for further information on land disputes.

14.3.2 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

‘... Issues of religious freedom and connection with land may overlap with ethnic issues. Officially registered churches that cooperate with the Government are generally able to organise and operate relatively freely and

²³⁵ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

²³⁶ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²³⁷ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²³⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²³⁹ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

²⁴⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁴¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

those that are engaged in political activism are likely to attract the attention of authorities.

‘Protestant groups can face bureaucratic difficulties. For example, gatherings might be banned on technicalities such as not having approved lists of attendees. DFAT is also aware of reports of recent examples of more serious harassment such as Protestant ministers in remote areas having assets seized or premises raided – but notes, again, that religious and political issues tend to overlap.

‘Registered Protestant groups experience less interference from the Government than unregistered groups. Nonetheless, DFAT understands some unregistered churches do operate. It is difficult to assess in a general way whether they have tacit approval of authorities, but some unregistered churches still operate with house church gatherings of a few people up to several hundred people. Other house churches may have a certificate of registration for prayer groups, for example for their family. The situation likely differs from place to place.

‘In-country sources told DFAT activities such as Protestant conferences and meetings are generally unrestricted in large cities. Efforts to expand or build churches in more remote areas can be difficult. Bureaucratic obstacles, including obtaining permits, may prevent the construction of churches or the establishment of new communities.

‘Conversely, Protestant house churches might provide social services with the cooperation of Government... Protestant religious education is available, but again the situation may differ from place to place.

‘... Despite some difficulties with bureaucracy, in-country sources told DFAT that efforts to evangelise and recruit new members are possible in large cities. DFAT understands that this is the case in relation to large events in which people might preach. Reports are mixed and DFAT understands that over time and in different parts of Vietnam there have been varying levels of tolerance from authorities towards evangelism.

‘DFAT assesses that members of registered Protestant churches face a low risk of official discrimination or harassment in relation to their faith. Adherents of unregistered Protestant churches face a moderate risk of official discrimination if they are engaged in political expression, protests or criticism of the Government ... In-country sources told DFAT that Protestants experience little societal discrimination, especially in cities. The situation is different in small rural communities, where societal discrimination might be more prevalent but would differ from community to community.’²⁴²

14.3.3 Radio Free Asia reported in September 2023 that:

‘In the video that went viral in Vietnam recently, a police officer forbids a church member of a group not recognized by the government from joining online services – and threatens his family members if he doesn't obey.

²⁴² DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.32- 3.36 & 3.38- 3.39), 11 January 2022

'... The video depicting the threats against the family of Giang A. Chu, ethnic Hmongs from Bac Ha district in the northern province of Lao Cai, was filmed on March 29 [2023], but spread on social media only recently.

'Since that warning was issued, Chu's family told RFA Vietnamese that police set up a checkpoint near their home and two or three security staff are stationed there around the clock.

'Police also confiscated their mobile phones and returned them only after deleting all the apps they were using to watch online services.

'... Since 2017, many followers of the religious group have been invited to police stations to sign statements renouncing their faith, a letter from one of its members, Thao A Chang, to both the Government Committee for Religious Affairs and the U.S. Embassy to Vietnam.

'Under pressure from local authorities and police, 103 out of a total of 794 followers recanted, the letter said.

'Vietnamese authorities consider the God Loves Us Church to teach heresy, and accuse its leader, Vu Thi Do, who lives in Wisconsin and is also known as Klao Jer Vue, of separatism.'²⁴³

14.3.4 Open Doors noted in their Vietnam full country dossier published in January 2024 noted that:

'Both non-traditional Protestants and converts from indigenous religions face intensive pressure and violence for their faith, especially in the remote areas of central and northern Vietnam. Most belong to the country's ethnic minorities, like the Hmong, and face social exclusion, discrimination and attacks. Their homes are sometimes destroyed and they are then forced to leave their villages. The attack against policemen and government officials in Dak Lak province on 11 June 2023, although not motivated by religion or persecution-related, illustrates how tensions with the Hmong minority and the Montagnard community (i.e., tribal groups in the Central Highlands) are simmering and can easily turn violent.'²⁴⁴

14.3.5 The Vietnamese noted in an article on February 2024 that:

'On Dec. 18, 2023, the Bac Kan provincial government stated it had completed the goal of Project No. 78 by eradicating the Duong Van Minh religion in the province. According to the government, the Duong Van Minh religion was present in five districts, 14 communes, and 19 villages with 899 followers.

'In November 2022, the government organized 11 working groups to suppress the Duong Van Minh religion. Since then, many funeral homes and altars in private homes have been removed, and many followers have been forced to sign a document stating that they will abandon this religious organization.

'... In the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam, the government believes that the Duong Van Minh religion has plans for self-rule and the establishment of an independent "Hmong State." The suppression of this

²⁴³ RFA, [Vietnam tries to force ethnic minority church members to recant faith](#), 8 September 2023

²⁴⁴ Open Doors, [Vietnam: Full Country Dossier](#), January 2024

religion has been severe. Up to now, four provinces have completely eliminated the Duong Van Minh religion, including Bac Kan, Thai Nguyen, Lao Cai, and Tuyen Quang.²⁴⁵

14.3.6 The USCIRF 2024 Annual Report stated:

‘Authorities actively restrict independent Montagnard Protestants’ religious activities, forcing them to renounce their faith and arresting and sentencing them on charges of “undermining national unity” and “abusing democratic freedoms.” Authorities pressured Hmong and Montagnard Protestants to join state-controlled Protestant religious organizations, surveilled them, and prevented their access to churches. Following the June [2023] attack on local government offices in Dak Lak Province that killed nine people, civil society groups raised concerns that the government would use this incident to extend persecution of the local Montagnard Christian community.

‘...In 2023, the government implemented Directive 78 to “eradicate the Duong Van Minh sect.” During its trip in May 2023, USCIRF saw videos allegedly showing authorities forcing members of Duong Van Minh to renounce their faith. Authorities also forced ethnic minorities to use Vietnamese, as opposed to their own ethnic minority languages, in religious worship and literature.

‘... In May, authorities arrested Nay Y Blang, a member of the Central Highlands Evangelical Church of Christ, for allegedly proselytizing and organizing illegal religious activities.’²⁴⁶

14.3.7 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

‘Local authorities in some parts of the Central Highlands reportedly intimidated and threatened violence against members of certain unregistered Protestant groups that reported human rights abuses to international NGOs or UN bodies, or commemorated international days focused on religious freedom. Reports indicated authorities pressured members of these groups to recant their affiliation with unregistered religious groups that the officials accused of opposing the government, or pressured members to instead join a registered religious organization. For example, in August [2023], ... ethnic minority Christians in the Central Highlands, ... reported authorities in several provinces warned them against observing or gathering on August 22 to acknowledge the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

‘... In September, multiple individuals shared a posted video that showed public security officers from Bac Ha District, Lao Cai Province forbidding an ethnic H’Mong Christian member of the unregistered God Loves Us Church from joining online worship services and participating in church activities. In the video, the officer threatened his wife and children, and stated authorities would cut off the water supply to his home if he did not comply.

‘... In December, a religious freedom NGO reported security forces in Dak Lak Province threatened several members of unregistered churches against

²⁴⁵ The Vietnamese, [Religion Bulletin - December 2023: Government Wipes Out...](#), 9 February 2024

²⁴⁶ USCIRF, [USCIRF 2024 Annual Report](#) (pages 50 - 51), May 2024

participating in “unauthorized” Christmas celebrations and pressured them to join the registered Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam.

‘... There were government and international media reports of local authorities banning and/or disrupting gatherings and confiscating publications of various religious groups. These included ... lesser known and unregistered groups such as ... the Evangelical Church of Christ in Dak Lak and Phu Yen Provinces, ...and the World Mission Society Church of God (Hoi Thanh Duc Chua Troi Me) in many provinces.

‘... In several cases, local authorities harassed members of unregistered local congregations. There were multiple reports of such harassment from ethnic minority Christians of independent churches such as the Evangelical Church of Christ, Good News Mission Church, independent house churches in Dak Lak and Phu Yen Provinces, Ba Co Do (Church of God Loving Us) in northern mountainous provinces such as Lao Cai, Dien Bien, and Lai Chau, and World Mission Society Church of God in major cities. Multiple reports said authorities summoned members of unregistered churches to public security offices, where security authorities told them to leave their unregistered churches to join the registered Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam.

‘... Ethnic minority Christians reported that security authorities prevented them from gathering during important religious events or forced them to take down their Christmas decorations. Authorities reportedly restricted their movements to prevent them from meeting with foreign diplomats. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam-North (ECVN) stated that obtaining recognition of its local congregations remained time consuming, although many of them had been operating stably for many years without official confirmation of their registration and, from their perspective, had fully met the registration requirements. The ECVN reported having more than 1,350 local branches and “meeting points.” Of these, ECVN said that 44 local branches and approximately 800 meeting points were registered. During the year, local authorities registered two new local branches out of seven applications and reported that “a few” meeting points successfully registered. The ECVN stated it experienced difficulties registering its meeting points with local authorities mostly in mountainous areas, including Lai Chau, Ha Giang, Cao Bang, Dien Bien, and Nghe An Provinces.

‘Authorities had registered approximately half of an estimated 150 meeting points of the Vietnam Baptist Convention (VBC) in the country. During the year, few meeting points affiliated with the VBC received registration while many VBC meeting points managed to register as affiliates of other recognized organizations. The majority of VBC meeting points in northern mountainous areas were registered. By the end of the year, local authorities had registered approximately 25 of 28 VBC meeting points in northern mountainous provinces. However, none of the nine meeting points in the northern delta provinces received registration approval. Despite lacking registration, many of these groups continued to meet without interruption.

‘... Similar to prior years, Protestant leaders continued to report local authorities interpreted and enforced the law inconsistently when processing registration applications for local congregations. Local authorities in Noong

Luong Commune, Dien Bien District, Dien Bien Province, for example, continued to deny the registration applications of an independent Pentecostal congregation, stating the congregation was affiliated with an unrecognized religious group. The group's religious leader, however, said the law did not require a local congregation to be affiliated with a recognized organization to receive registration. The leader also noted that the local congregation had been active for nearly 30 years before filing a registration application in 2017. Dien Bien authorities continued to deny registration of the Assembly of God of Vietnamese People (Hoi Thanh Phuc Am Ngu Tuan Nguoi Viet), stating that the applicant's dogma was indistinguishable from that of the recognized Assembly of God of Vietnam (Giao hoi Phuc Am Ngu Tuan Viet Nam). Similarly, local authorities in Bac Can, Hung Yen, and Phu Tho Provinces continued to deny registrations of Pentecostal groups that refused to affiliate themselves to recognized organizations.

'The VBC stated that authorities continued to deny registration requests for new local congregations in many provinces, including in Thanh Hoa, Hanoi, Hai Phong, Quang Ninh, Hai Duong Provinces and in the Northwest Highlands. Local authorities encouraged registration of these new local congregations under recognized organizations.

'Religious leaders stated that the central authorities continued to deny applications of several Protestant groups, including the VBC and United Presbyterian Church in Vietnam. Religious freedom advocates stated that the determining factor as to whether local authorities approved a registration application was more closely linked to the religious group's perspective on politics than on religious dogma or legal requirements. The GCRA continued to deny public access to pending registration applications.²⁴⁷

- 14.3.8 At the time of writing in December 2024, the CAT-VN list has the details of 66 Montagnard Protestants. Forty are detailed as being under 'post release probation/house arrest' and 26 are recorded as being detained, however the list is from February 2022 and some of those listed were due to be released in 2022/2023²⁴⁸.
- 14.3.9 At the time of writing in December 2024, the 88 Project list the details of 27 Protestants. 5 are listed as 'at risk', 9 are listed as 'likely released- at risk', 4 are listed as 'released- at risk' and 2 are listed as 'released- exiled'. 7 of those on the list are detailed as currently being detained. 6 of those listed are Montagnards who were detained based on their religious activity and one, of Kinh ethnicity, was detained for their perceived opposition to the state²⁴⁹ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).
- 14.3.10 The 88 Project list also has the details of 50 Christians some of whom appear on other databases listed as Protestants. 3 of the 50 Christians are recorded as at risk, 28 are recorded as likely released at risk, 1 is recorded in pre-trial detention, and 6 are recorded as released at risk. 12 are recorded as sentenced to prison with 4 detained due to their religion, 2 detained for trying to establish a separate Hmong state and 6 detained due to their

²⁴⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

²⁴⁸ CAT-VN, [Vietnam's Repression of Montagnard Christians](#), February 2022

²⁴⁹ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

perceived opposition to the state²⁵⁰ (See also the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Opposition to the state](#)).

14.3.11 At the time of writing in December 2024, USCIRF records the details of 33 Protestants (including those recorded as Christian-unspecified/Other and those recorded as Duong Van Minh religion). One was recorded as released from detention. The whereabouts of 6 were unknown, 5 were Montagnards and one was Hmong. USCIRF recorded 26 people as still being detained 13 of those were arrested due to their affiliation with the Degar Protestant Church, a movement not approved by the government, 4 were arrested due to their attendance at the funeral of the religious leader Duong Van Minh, 3 were accused of being in contact with an American based pastor whom is alleged to support separatist activities in Vietnam, 2 were accused of belonging to a religious group not approved by the government, 2 were accused spreading false information about minority rights and religious freedom in order to establish an independent state and 1 was accused of collecting false information and sending to 'reactionary forces' overseas²⁵¹.

14.3.12 Using information from the USCIRF list, the CAT-VN list and the 88 Project list CPIT have produced the table below showing the details of those recorded as detained for their religious belief/activity. The personal details, details of the date of arrest, date released, and arrest/charges are the same on all databases unless otherwise stated. Those highlighted in purple should have been released from detention but, as of December 2024, are still recorded on at least 1 database as detained. This could be because the individual is still detained, their location unknown, or the sources had no up-to-date information regarding the individual's actual release.

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Charges/Sentence
Name: Siu Bler Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestant	August 2004	Should have been released 2021. The 88 Project have him recorded as still detained ²⁵² . Listed on CAT-VN list as released and in post release probation/house arrest until 2026 ²⁵³ . Not recorded on the USCIRF list.	Sentenced to 17 years in prison.

²⁵⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁵¹ USCIRF, '[Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#)', no date

²⁵² The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁵³ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Siu Hlom</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Degar Protestantism</p>	August 2010	<p>Should have been released August 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated February 2022 ²⁵⁴.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²⁵⁵.</p> <p>The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released'²⁵⁶.</p>	Sentenced to 12 years in prison followed by 3 years house arrest ²⁵⁷ and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
<p>Name: Ro Mah Pla</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Degar Protestantism</p>	2013	<p>Should have been released 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated February 2022²⁵⁸.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²⁵⁹.</p> <p>Not recorded on the 88 Project list</p>	Sentenced to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".

²⁵⁴ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁵⁵ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁵⁶ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁵⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁵⁸ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁵⁹ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Y Yich Ethnic group: Bahnar (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	May 2013	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁶⁰ ²⁶¹ ²⁶²	In 2013 sentenced to 12 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation.
Name: Dinh Yum Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	2013	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated 2022 ²⁶³ ²⁶⁴ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2017 to 11 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Rmah Khil Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	2014	Should have been released May 2023. Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022 ²⁶⁵ . USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown' ²⁶⁶ . Not recorded on the 88 Project list	Sentenced to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".

²⁶⁰ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁶¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁶² The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁶³ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁶⁴ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁶⁵ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁶⁶ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Kpuih Khuong Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	2014	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated 2022 ²⁶⁷ ²⁶⁸ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 11 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Rmah Bloanh Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	2014	Should have been released July 2022. Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022 ²⁶⁹ . USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown' ²⁷⁰ . Not recorded on the 88 Project list	Sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".

²⁶⁷ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁶⁸ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁶⁹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁷⁰ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Y Hriam Kpa</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Evangelical Protestant</p>	July 2015	<p>Should have been released July 2022.</p> <p>Listed on CAT-VN list as detained although the list was last updated 2022²⁷¹.</p> <p>USCIRF lists his whereabouts as 'unknown'²⁷².</p> <p>The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released'²⁷³.</p>	Sentenced to 7 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
<p>Name: Siu Doang</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Degar Protestantism</p>	2016	<p>Still detained.</p> <p>Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022²⁷⁴ ²⁷⁵.</p> <p>Not on The 88 Project list.</p>	Charged with "undermining national unity policy" and sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation
<p>Name: Siu Dik</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Degar Protestant Church</p>	2016	<p>Still detained.</p> <p>Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022²⁷⁶ ²⁷⁷.</p> <p>Not on The 88 Project list.</p>	Charged with "undermining national unity policy". In 2016 sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation.

²⁷¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁷² USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁷³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁷⁴ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁷⁵ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁷⁶ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁷⁷ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Ksor Phit Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestant Church	2016	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁷⁸ ²⁷⁹ Not on The 88 Project list.	Charged with "undermining national unity policy". In 2016 sentenced to 11 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation.
Name: Ksor Pup Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	2016	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁸⁰ ²⁸¹ Not on The 88 Project list.	Charged with "undermining national unity policy". In July 2016 sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation.
Name: Puih Bop Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	September 2016	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁸² ²⁸³ ²⁸⁴	Sentenced in 2017 to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".

²⁷⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁷⁹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁸⁰ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁸¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁸² USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁸³ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁸⁴ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Ksor Kam Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	September 2016	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁸⁵ ^{286 287}	Sentenced in 2017 to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Ro Lan Kly Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	September 2016	Expected release was September 2024. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁸⁸ ²⁸⁹ . The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released' ²⁹⁰ .	Sentenced in 2017 to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years probation for "undermining national unity policy".

²⁸⁵ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁸⁶ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁸⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁸⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁸⁹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁹⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
<p>Name: Dinh Nong</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Degar Protestantism</p>	September 2016	<p>Expected release was September 2024.</p> <p>Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022²⁹¹ ²⁹².</p> <p>The 88 Project have no release date recorded but list him as 'likely released'²⁹³.</p>	Sentenced in 2017 to 8 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
<p>Name: Y Min Ksor</p> <p>Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard)</p> <p>Religious group: Good News Missionary Church</p>	April 2018	<p>Still detained.</p> <p>Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022²⁹⁴ ²⁹⁵.</p> <p>Not on The 88 Project list.</p>	USCIRF state he was sentenced to 14 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy" ²⁹⁶ . CAT-VN state he was sentenced to 9 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation ²⁹⁷ .

²⁹¹ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁹² CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁹³ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

²⁹⁴ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁹⁵ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

²⁹⁶ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁹⁷ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Y Pum Bya Ethnic group: Ede (Montagnard) Religious group: Good News Missionary Church	2018	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ²⁹⁸ ²⁹⁹ Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2019 to 14 years in prison and 4 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Ksor Ruk Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	October 2018	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³⁰⁰ ^{301 302}	March 2019 sentenced to 10 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy"
Name: Rah Lan Hip Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	May 2019	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³⁰³ ^{304 305}	In August 2019 sentenced to 7 years in prison and 3-5 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy"

²⁹⁸ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

²⁹⁹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³⁰⁰ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³⁰¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³⁰² The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

³⁰³ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³⁰⁴ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³⁰⁵ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Y Tup Knul Ethnic group: Ede (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestant Church	October 2020	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³⁰⁶ ³⁰⁷ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Charged with “activities against the People’s government”.
Name: Ro Ma Daih Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: Degar Protestantism	September 2016	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³⁰⁸ ³⁰⁹ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2017 to 10 years in prison and 3-5 years’ probation for “undermining national unity policy”.
Name: Rah Lan Rah Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: First Christian Church	December 2020	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³¹⁰ ³¹¹ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2021 to 6 years in prison and 3 years’ probation for “undermining national unity policy”.

³⁰⁶ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³⁰⁷ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³⁰⁸ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³⁰⁹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³¹⁰ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³¹¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Siu Chon Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: First Christian Church	December 2020	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³¹² ³¹³ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2021 to 6 years in prison and 3 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Ro Mah Them Ethnic group: Jarai (Montagnard) Religious group: First Christian Church	December 2020	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF and CAT-VN although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³¹⁴ ³¹⁵ . Not on The 88 Project list.	Sentenced in 2021 to 5 years in prison and 3 years' probation for "undermining national unity policy".
Name: Y Wo Nie Ethnic group: Ede (Montagnard) Religious group: Independent House Church- Dak Lak	September 2021	Still detained. Listed on all lists as detained although the CAT-VN list was last updated in February 2022 ³¹⁶ ³¹⁷ ³¹⁸	USCIRF and the 88 Project state he was sentenced in 2022 to 4 years in prison for "abusing democratic freedoms" ³¹⁹ ³²⁰ . The CAT-VN database does not have any details of his sentence ³²¹ .

³¹² USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³¹³ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³¹⁴ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³¹⁵ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³¹⁶ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³¹⁷ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

³¹⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

³¹⁹ USCIRF, ['Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List'](#), no date

³²⁰ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

³²¹ CAT-VN, [Montagnard Prisoners of Conscience](#), February 2022

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Duong Van Tu Ethnic group: Hmong Religious group: Duong Van Minh	December 2021	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list ³²² . Not on the CAT-VN or The 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “violating safety in crowded areas”
Name: Duong Van Lanh Ethnic group: Hmong Religious group: Duong Van Minh	December 2021	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list ³²³ . Not on the CAT-VN or The 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 3 years and 9 months in prison for “violating safety in crowded areas”
Name: Ly Xuan Anh Ethnic group: Hmong Religious group: Duong Van Minh	December 2021	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list ³²⁴ . Not on the CAT-VN or The 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison for “violating safety in crowded areas”
Name: Ly Van Dung Ethnic group: Hmong Religious group: Duong Van Minh	December 2021	Still detained. Listed as detained on USCIRF list ³²⁵ . Not on the CAT-VN or The 88 Project list.	Sentenced to 4 years in prison for “resisting a law enforcement officer”
Name: Nay Y Blang Ethnic group: Ede (Montagnard) Religious group: Central Highlands Evangelical Church of Christ	May 2023	Still detained. Listed on the USCIRF and the 88 Project database ^{326 327} . Arrested after publication on the CAT-VN list.	Sentenced to 4 years and 6 months in prison.

³²² USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³²³ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³²⁴ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³²⁵ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³²⁶ USCIRF, [‘Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List’](#), no date

³²⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Personal details	Date arrested	Date released	Arrest/charges
Name: Y Krec Bya Ethnic group: Ede (Montagnard) Religious group: Evangelical Church of Christ of the Central Highlands	April 2023	Still detained. Listed on the 88 Project database ³²⁸ . Not listed on the USCIRF. Arrested after publication of CAT-VN list.	Sentenced to 13 years in prison.

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14.4 Caodaists

14.4.1 The 2022 DFAT report noted:

'As with other religious groups, members of officially registered Cao Dai groups can worship mostly without restriction. The US Department of State 2020 International Religious Freedom Report noted an incident in which an officially registered Cao Dai group disrupted an unofficial Cao Dai service in a private home, and another similar incident at a temple. The unregistered group accused the Government of using the registered group as a proxy to disrupt their activities. DFAT cannot confirm if these incidents were linked to Government action or whether they represent a split between the two groups; schisms have formed in the past.'³²⁹

14.4.2 The same DFAT report provided its assessment of risk to unregistered members of the Cao Dai religion: 'DFAT assesses unregistered Cao Dai organisations face a moderate risk of harassment, and possible violence, from authorities or other groups such as members of other Cao Dai sects. Members of the officially registered group face a low risk of official discrimination. DFAT is not aware of societal discrimination against Cao Daists.'³³⁰

14.4.3 CSW, a Christian advocacy organisation who focus on freedom of religion or belief³³¹, noted in March 2022 that: 'Independent Cao Dai ... groups are also targeted with a range of violations, including disruption of religious activities, arbitrary detention of religious leaders and adherents, and confiscation of property used for religious worship.'³³² The source did not provide any information on how many Caodaists this affected.

14.4.4 The 2023 USSD RIRF noted:

'... in August [2023], ... independent Cao Dai followers reported authorities ... warned them against observing or gathering on August 22 to

³²⁸ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 November 2024

³²⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.47-3.48), 11 January 2022

³³⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report: Vietnam](#) (para 3.47-3.48), 11 January 2022

³³¹ CSW, [About us](#), no date

³³² CSW, [General Briefing: Vietnam](#), 22 March 2022

acknowledge the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

‘...in September [2023] authorities prevented Nguyen Xuan Mai from an unregistered Cao Dai group from traveling internationally to attend a religious pilgrimage...

‘There were government and international media reports of local authorities banning and/or disrupting gatherings and confiscating publications of various religious groups. These included ... lesser known and unregistered groups such as ... unregistered Cao Dai groups in the Mekong Delta...

‘... According to NGO reports, in August, security authorities of Tan Hanh Commune, Long Ho District, Vinh Long Province pressured Phan Thi Bui against inviting other independent Cao Dai adherents from neighboring provinces to her late husband’s death commemoration and accused her of “networking with reactionary individuals.”³³³

14.4.5 The USCIRF’s report on State-Controlled Religion and Religious Freedom in Vietnam, published in September 2024, noted:

‘Since the establishment [by the Vietnamese government] of the 1997 [Cao Dai] Sect, the Vietnamese government has pursued a strategy of substitution for the Cao Dai religion. This strategy has involved taking over the name and identity of the Cao Dai Church, appointing leadership, targeting independent religious leaders who resist government control through “excommunication” and physical violence, providing perquisites to those who acquiesce and join the 1997 Sect, and transferring the property of the independent Cao Dai Church to the 1997 Sect...

‘... the MPS [Ministry of Public Security] has placed under travel bans numerous Cao Dai lay leaders who participated in international fora to advocate for the reestablishment of their church, the return of their temples, and the right of all Cao Dai to freely practice their faith...

‘Members of the 1997 Sect have broken into independent Cao Dai members’ homes, trashed their altars, destroyed furniture, and physically assaulted those in attendance. Many victims have filed police reports without receiving any response. Members of the 1997 Sect have hindered funerals and burials and/or desecrated the graves of deceased independent Cao Dai followers, often in an attempt to force their families to submit to the 1997 Sect.’³³⁴

14.4.6 The BTI 2024 report, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, noted: ‘Freedom to practice one’s religion continues to be subject to constraint. ...some Cao Dai... have been harassed and arrested because of their religious practices, or on charges of undermining the unity policy of the party-state.’³³⁵

14.4.7 At the time of writing in December 2024, the 88 Project’s Database of Persecuted Activists in Vietnam lists the details of 3 Caodaists, none of those listed were detained. The details of the 3 showed that all were

³³³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#), 30 June 2024

³³⁴ USCIRF, [State-Controlled Religion and Religious Freedom...](#) (Pages 13-14), September 2024

³³⁵ BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

described by the 88 Project as being 'at risk'³³⁶. The 88 Project define being 'at risk' as 'those who are not currently in prison, but who are otherwise harassed'. This harassment includes physical attack, interrogation, administrative fines, forced eviction, and passport denial. They also state that the determination of an activist at risk is not 'by the way they identify themselves, but by the nature of their actions. They might not identify themselves as an activist, but they are engaging in activism that has put them under the state's persecution.'³³⁷

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³³⁶ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

³³⁷ The 88 Project, [Database](#), 10 December 2024

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- a. Ethnic groups
 - demography
 - Legal status
 - Background info on specific groups- Hoa, Hmong, Montagnards etc.
- Treatment of ethnic groups
 - Government policies and services
 - Poverty
 - State discrimination, harassment and detention
 - Societal treatment
- State treatment of specific groups
 - Chinese (Hoa)
 - Montagnards
 - Hmong
 - Khmer Krom
- Religious groups
 - Religious demography
 - Legal status
 - Background info on specific groups- Protestants, Catholics, Buddhism, Cao Dai, other religions
- Treatment of religious groups
 - State treatment of registered religious groups
 - State treatment of unregistered religious groups
- State treatment of specific religious groups
 - Protestants
 - Catholics
 - Buddhists (unified church of Vietnam)
 - Cao Dai

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **16 December 2024**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information

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